Masters of English Literature Series

BYRON

CHILDE HAROLD

CANTO III

with

A COMPREHENSIVE CRITICAL INTRODUCTION, PARAPHRASES OF DIFFICULT STANZA, COMMENTARIES AND NOTES & EXPLANATIONS

by

M. ASLAM, M.A. (Eng.), M.A. (Journ.)

Sometime Lecturer in English, Editor of 'Francis Bacon', 'John Donne' and other books for M. A. English Students

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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF LORD BYRON

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Birth and Parentage : The poet was born in the City of London in the month of January, 1788. Astrologers say that the odds are in favour of a stormy career for those born in that month. Burns also was born in January. Though born in England, his mother was Scottish, and when the poet was born to her, she was in the course of a journey from France to her own home in Scotland. The father was English, so Byron cannot be fully claimed by either England or Scotland. He had a deep love of the Highland scenery he saw in his early days, but in outlook and in ideas he was a man of the world, rather than a patriot of any single country.

The father's family was an ancient line of Norman descent. A forefather had been Sir John Byron, who got a rich grant of land from Henry VIII when that monarch broke up the wealthy monasteries during the Reformation in England, and bestowed their broad acres on his nobles who had served him well. But the family had fallen into the dissipation and fast living to which the aristocratic classes were prone in those days, and Byron's father was dissipated and loose in morals, getting money by any means and spending it in the loose pleasures of London life. After an elopement with the Countess of Caermarthen and a divorce, the elder Byron took as his second wife Miss Catherine Gordon of an Aberdeenshire family. The marriage was not happy. Mrs. Byron found that her husband cared little for her, and cared much for her money, which he squandered in reckless dissipation. He did not like the cold northern atmosphere of Aberdeen, so he left her. In the long run, Byron settled in France and lived there in poverty. He had persuaded his wife to come and live with him there, the poet at that time being three years old.

Byron was thus left to his mother's care, and it does not seem that her nature and personality were of the type requir-

ed in the education of a child. She is said to have been vain and unsteady, subject to nervous fits and flashes of temper. Sometimes she poured out motherly love, and again showed violent anger. Young Byron was born with a deformed or "club" foot which was never remedied, a weakness that had undoubtedly an effect on his mental outlook. He recalled later in life that his mother sometimes called him, "You lame brat," and even threw at him any object that happened to be at hand. Is it strange that he turned out to be a neurotic and unreliable in his moods, having been exposed to such influences in the sensitive years of childhood ? With a neurotic and flightly mother, and a disreputable and dissipated farther of low tastes, it had the effect of giving the boy's character an early twist ; and many of Byron's rash acts and passionate desires must be traced in the first place, to heredity, and secondly, to the very undesirable environment of his early education. The two factors combined made Byron into the rake and libertine that he undoubtedly was.

The father, with his depraved tastes, squandered Mrs. Byron's money and there was sometimes actual want in the early years of the poet's life. This was relieved when the mother was granted a pension of £700 a year from the Civil List. In 1798, young Byron at the age of 10 succeeded to his father's title, and was brought to England to take up residence in the family residence of Newstead Abbey. This old building was in a neglected state, not fit for habitation, so mother and son moved to London.

Byron's School and College Career : When he was ten years of age, Byron was sent to a preparatory school conducted by a teacher called Dr. Glennie. This man perceived that the boy had some literary taste and a fondness for good reading, so he decided that the best course was to give him full freedom in a library of good books, giving discrete guidance the while. So the boy read through the works of the greatest English poets: Chaucer, Spenser, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Milton, and Shakespeare, with many lesser ones. In 1801 he was sent to the famous public school of Harrow, not far from London. His deformed foot made it impossible for him to participate in the school games,

though he managed to learn to swim. He had moods in which he liked to be alone and to sit in a lonely nook of "the Hill" on which Harrow School is situated. From that point, he could look over five English counties. "Byron's Seat" is still pointed out to visitors. But he was not by any means a hermit of the John Milton kind, for he formed friendships which he afterwards described as "strong as passions." He picked up a fair amount of general knowledge of the classics of Greece and Rome, as well as of the French and Italian languages. All this tended to foster a love of the beautiful, though it was not entirely due to his studies, but seems to have been in him from the beginning.

During the Harrow period, occurred the first of the many love-episodes which were to mark his life. This was with Mary Chaworth, his own cousin and an heiress to to considerable property adjoining his own family estate of Newstead Abbey. She seems to have been a vain and empty-headed girl, with no depth of character. She flirted with the young poet, oblivious of the fact that he was taking the affair rather seriously. Nothing came of the affair, except that it may have contributed to the cynical element of Byron's character.

After leaving Harrow, Byron went to Trinity College of Cambridge University. There was no formal Matriculation examination comparable with that which we know. The University is as a man cares to make it. There is learning for the scholar and dissipation for the weak man or the libertine. Fashionable young men of "noble" families used to drink hard and spend their time in all kinds of excesses. Byron, with a hereditary leaning towards such vices, plunged at once into the life of drinking and promiscuous love affairs. The call of the physical senses prevailed, and he abandoned himself to a period of sharp and feverish pleasures. He achieved nothing in the department of study and carried away no real respect for the good features of life at Cambridge, which had been too cloistered and austere for his taste. This Cambridge period, however, saw his first literary adventure, which was of some importance.

In the summer of 1806, Byron collected and published some of his youthful efforts in verse. Some were rather daring—the more severe in morals even called them indecent. The first issue was quickly withdrawn, the undesirable pieces removed, and a fresh publication undertaken. It was titled *Hours of Idleness*. Some critics wrote with praise, but Jeffery, in the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote a bitter attack on his youthful work. A similar attack by this writer was said to have had a harmful attack on the young poet, Keats. Byron was not content to take this meekly, but hit back at once. He had been studying what he conceived to be the elements of weakness in the chief English poets, and now put all his criticisms into a poem called *English Bards and Scots Reviewers*. His verse was lively and sparkling, his treatment of the reviewers was cutting and masterly, and he parodied the faults of many a popular poet in a clever manner. Nothing in the way of satire had been so good since Pope had flayed his contemporaries in *The Dunciad*. The reviewers were more careful in future, and accorded him recognition which weakness would never have earned.

Byron's European Travels and Impressions: After leaving Cambridge without any kind of degree, Byron lived for some time in the family residence of Newstead Abbey, even though it was in a bad state of repair. It gave him a romantic environment, a link with the picturesque bygone days, and this was of value to a poet with a sensitive and highly imaginative mind. It is an undoubted fact that the beautiful but decayed ancient Abbey made a lasting impression on Byron's mind, though he could never stay there for any prolonged period. At the age of twenty-one, he was eligible to take his seat in the House of Lords. He invited his friends to celebrate this house party with him at the Abbey. They lived there for some time, shocking the neighbourhood by their drunkenness and wild habits. But in that same summer, Byron tired of this, so, with a friend called Hobhouse and a few servants, set out to see the continent of Europe.

After a fleeting visit to Spain and Portugal, he crossed the Mediterranean to the country of Albania. For eighteen

months he lived in eastern Europe, going about in Turkey and Greece, and even making a trip into Asia Minor. He had some novel experience, and he returned to England in July of 1811. This yielded material for a writer of romantic tastes, and the tour formed the basis for the first part of *Childe Harold*. Byron did not consider this a work of great merit, and was surprised when the public hailed it with favour. It was new, a fresh type of thought about unusual subjects, and made Byron's reputation at once. The pleasure of this was lessened when he found on his return that two close friends, Edelstome and Wingfield, and also his own mother, had died a short time before.

Byron in London : Returning to London, Byron could not have imagined that within five years he would leave England for good, in a mood of bitterness and rebellion. He rose to the heights, and plunged into the depths of ill fame. The public which had garlanded him with flowers, flung at him insults and stones. He was at one period the spoiled favourite and then the untouchable outcast of English society.

His immediate success was perhaps inclined to go to the head of youth with intoxicating effect. The public had applauded *Childe Harold*, and he had been praised for his first speech in the House of Lords. Every mansion of the fashionable world of London was open to him. A parallel is to be found in the case of Robert Burns, who was at one time the idol of the best circles in Edinburgh, and quickly discarded when he had his transitory period of success. The temptations of a loose society, with laxity of morals and every incentive to vice and indulgence, were even greater than at Cambridge. It required a strong mind and level-headed man to avoid them, to assess such things and such friends at their proper value. Byron was perhaps strong-minded, but it was in the wrong direction ; and he was never level-headed. He was a young man of high social position, of handsome and striking appearance, with a reputation as the poet of the day, and with a certain income now assured. The fair but frail society gladies flocked round him, and he was able to make his choice. One love affair, if the name of "love" can be bestowed by such application, followed swiftly

another: Those with Caroline Lamb, Francis Webster, and so on, would make a book of interesting, if "spicy" reading. This intensive and luxurious life left comparatively little time for the pursuit of literature or politics, in either of which he would possibly have risen to the summit of success.

He did not desist from writing. Indeed he wrote, if anything, too much ; for a little of Milton's care and fastidious revision would have benefited him. The romantic tales and characters which he had learned in his European tour were now given verse form in *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *The Siege of Corinth*, all published between 1813 and 1816. Some of them were turned out at breakneck speed, in calm hours or remorseful hours, between bouts of drinking. They were spirited and fluent enough, but lacked the feeling and emotion of greatness. They were romantic tales in verse, and there was a demand for them. The people were tired of the conventional and narrow limits of classical writers like Pope, and wanted to roam into fresh worlds, to have something new and unusual. These may have been what Ruskin termed, "Books of the day," but they satisfied a taste that was popular, if not lofty. It is recorded that 13,000 copies of *The Corsair* were sold in one day. It was a modern "Best Seller," and " Book of the Year" in its time. Byron recognised the demand and decided to supply it.

Marriage Relations : What type of woman would have made a good wife for this pampered favourite of fortune, with vice in his very veins and with public applause showered on him? He married a very virtuous lady, chiefly interested in study. She was cold and austere, puritanical in outlook. Fletcher, the personal servant of the poet, is reported as having said, "I never knew a woman who could not manage my master except my Lady." She was not only narrow and puritanical but seems to have been deficient in tact and common-sense. The marriage was held in 1815, and a daughter was born in the same year. A few weeks afterwards, Lady Byron left her husband, and they were never together again. We cannot say what were the exact causes, other than "incompatibility of temperament" as the divorce courts of Great Britain express it at times. There can

be no doubt that, to a woman of strict morals like Lady Byron, much of Byron's life would appear shameful and scandalous. The jackals who batten on the lives and destinies of dead authors have made much of one rumour, that the immediate cause was a love affair which Byron had with a lady called Mrs. Leigh. As this lady was Byron's half-sister, such an affair would have been more sinful and immoral because of the relationship involved. We need not pay any attention to this nor argue whether it was true or false. It was not brought out publicly during the poet's lifetime, when he might have been able to refute the accusation. In any case, it matters little. We can accept the fact that there was enough of ordinary scandalous conduct and immorality in Byron's life to drive away a wife of Puritan tendencies, without trying to prove one more amour of special blackness.

This misdemeanour would be one explanation of the sudden and complete revulsion which took place in the public attitude to Byron. He was not, like Burns, simply dropped when a passing taste lessened, was slandered and cursed and reviled till he was made to feel an outcast, a black sheep driven out of the community. Actual separation or divorce between husband and wife was then much less common than now ; but even that was not enough to explain the torrent of abuse and hostility which descended suddenly on this darling of society. Macaulay tells us that the British public was then passing through one of its periodic fits of morality. The mob, as Shakespeare has shown in *Julius Caesar*, prone to change with speed against its favourites, turning its fickle love into hate. It is doubtful whether anything in Byron's conduct deserved the abuse which the world poured on him. He dared not appear in social gatherings or at the theatre, and one actress, reputed to have been friendly with him, was hooted from the stage. A rumour was set about that he was pro-French in sympathy, and this was a further cause of unpopularity. Byron was hurt by this sudden change in popular treatment, and felt that it was unjust. In his resentment, he resolved to leave such an ungrateful land. A legal separation from his wife was quickly arranged, and he sailed for France. Perhaps he thought that a temporary absence

would allow public hostility to die down, and that he and his wife might come together again. However, the separation from country and fro n wife both proved to be final.

The Second Period Abroad : Byron was sensitive, and loved to think of himself as a dramatic and striking figure. Shakespeare has shown us that the deposed King Richard seemed to enjoy tragic misfortune, even the loss of his crown, provided he was a striking figure in the limelight. Byron had a similar love of posing. He imagined himself to resemble Ishmail of Bible history, wandering in search of peace, alone and unloved. He spent seven years, 1816-1823 travelling on the Continent, trying to create action to still the storms in his mind. He stayed a short time in Venice, then passed on to the town of Ravenna, then to Genoa, Milan and Pisa. In none of them was he able to settle down. Perhaps when the novelty of the dramatic situation had worn off, he found it a painful thing to be a wanderer from his homeland and he rambled as if urged on by a restless spirit. He sought for diversion and amusement in the usual series of common love affairs, he climbed mountains and went swimming, he threw himself into subversive political activities of the kind which arise like weeds in continental countries. This latter fact arose, no doubt, from the fact that Byron was always a rebel against discipline and constituted authority, and, as he said himself, he was "always of the opposition." Though they were restless and unconstructive years in some ways, they produced some of Byron's best works. Tragic circumstances and adversity often serve as a tonic to the literary artists, and in this case it was so. He produced the last two cantos of *Childe Harold*, *Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment*, and the best of his poems, *Don Juan*. They showed a mastery of his style and verse which had not appeared in earlier works, and made for him a place in the gallery of English poets which will be recognised by posterity. By doing this, he felt that he was scoring off the ungrateful people who had driven him from England, for they found that they still had to read his verse romances. Knowing that he was assured of a public, of an audience, he delighted in attacking the small-minded elements who had driven him out, the fanatics and the purists

and the hypocritical humbugs, and in stripping off the mask of insincere respectability of the society which had expelled him.

When he first crossed over to France, Byron met the poet Shelley and formed an enduring friendship with him. With Shelley and his wife, he explored all the places of historic interest around Geneva, and at the same time he composed Canto 3 of *Childe Harold*, and *The Prisoner of Chillon*. Then, with brief halts at Milan and Verona, Byron made for Venice, and that place tied him down for the space of three years, though there were minor expeditions outside Venice during that time. Venice is one of the most romantic old cities of Europe, and it laid a charm on Byron that never weakened. At the same time, it was a community of very lax morals in which he found himself, for the Italian race had lost the ancient religious and spiritual strength of earlier days ; and their noble classes, in particular, were pleasure-loving, licentious, and immoral. Byron again found his pleasure in a series of affairs with attractive women of loose character ; and we have an account of several, indeed as low as the common women of the bazaars. In the midst of this dross, there was one higher passion, his love for Teresa, the Countess Guiccioli. She was a young and charming girl with an aged husband of over sixty ; and the morals of the time were such that for such a wife to have an acknowledged lover in the handsome English nobleman was in no way a disgrace. In 1819, she and Byron were in love with each other, and the affair was common knowledge and accepted without question by the best Venetian circles. When she left for Ravenna in 1819, Byron went after her, and there was no slackening in this attachment until she died, still a young woman.

His connection with this family of the Guiccioli led to Byron being entangled in the activities of a revolutionary group. This involved them in the notice of the Austrian government, and that was why the Guicciolis had to move on to Pisa. Byron followed them to the place but they were again moved on by official pressure, and in 1822 left for Genoa. There, life was more peaceful, even if it was uneventual : and it was there, in 1828, that Byron learned

that he had been appointed a member of the Greek Committee, a small body of influential liberals, who had taken up the cause of the liberation of Greece. Byron promptly threw himself into the cause ; and offered money and advice ; and determined to go to Greece. The seven years of the stay in Italy were the greatest and most fruitful period of Byron's literary work.

Missolongi : Byron departed from Leghorn in July, 1823, and arrived at Cephalonia on the 3rd of August. His hope was to plunge at once into the fighting and to offer his life for Greece, thus by one heroic sacrifice showing a hostile world how he had justified his honour. But the Greeks were disunited and were not prepared for action, there being two opposing parties under Mavrocordato and Odysseus respectively. Byron enrolled himself under Mavrocordato, the leader of the aristocratic party, and landed at Missolongi. He had, if he had but known it, only three more months to live but he filled them with glorious striving, trying to unite the opposing sections of the Greeks and to train the volunteers which had been raised for the struggle. He threw in his strengths and his wealth, but in vain. The toil exhausted him, and moreover, he neglected all reasonable precautions for his health. He contracted fever and died, his body being buried in the marshes, far from his English homeland. The peace he had never found in life, he found in death ; the epitaph on his tombstone was "Implora Pace."

Byron had made a ruin of his life. With all the advantages of youth, good looks and wealth, he was never happy. Most great artists are erratic and unstable, their sensitive souls being too easily upset. They feel that all the sorrow of humanity sit on them like a heavy burden. They may be young in years but are old in suffering, worn with the age-long sorrow of this ancient universe. But Byron's was not this sympathetic, responsive sorrow of the poet and artist. It was the stormful and tumultuous rage of the supreme egoist baffled in his pride and crossed in his passions. Pride and passion—these were the ruling principles of his nature, and he had never learned to govern his temper. Perhaps it was more his misfortune than his fault that it should be so. He had a bad ancestry and a bad up-

bringing ; and the society of his day, the fashionable society of which he was a member by right of birth, was the bad, artificial and thoroughly dissolute society of the Regency. And so he spent the finest years of his life in around of vapid dissipation or of low, miserable intrigue, which ought to have been revolting to the finer moral sense of the true artist. And it is a tribute to the energy of his genius and the fertility of his intellect that, in spite of these wasting and corroding influences, he has left us so much that is good and strong and true.

Byron's life has been made a peg upon which to hang many moral homilies and from which as from a pulpit, to preach to youth. Let us admit his many faults, that he sullied a noble spirit with degrading passions. Nevertheless his nobility was never lost. Milton described Satan as appearing not like a fiend but rather like an archangel who had become soiled and dimmed. So it was with Lord Byron. He was a Jekyll and Hyde as more men are than we realise. His physical man wallowed in self-indulgence while his spirit tried to soar aloft. He was always a friend to the weak and oppressed ; he was of a generous mind ; his literary judgments were just and kindly ; and he gave liberally in charity. Though not rich, he gave away to the limit of his resources, and no one ever applied for aid in vain. He poured his money into the coffers of the Greeks in their fight against Turkish oppression. He harmed no one but benefited many, and injured hardly anyone but himself. His passions, if purified and canalized, might have led him to a paradise instead of dragging him down. What waste, when we survey the lives of Byron, Burns and Wilde!

The main charge levelled against Byron has been that of lack of sincerity, striving for dramatic effect, of acting a part and posing for the limelight. But in many ways he was outspoken and candid about escapades of his life which a finer character would have been ashamed to mention. It will not be entirely fair to say that he was never sincere, but was always striving for dramatic effect. He was morbid and pessimistic, certainly, extremely sensitive, and self-conscious to a degree which often prevented full sincerity. He set himself in the part of a man sorrowful and devoured

by inward grief, disappointed with the world. Such was not a true picture, because at the outset the world had treated him well ; but he came to like the pose and never gave it up. The separation from wife and self-imposed exile from England completed the picture and made it true, giving some foundation for what had been but a pose. A tempestuous personality, injured alike by destiny or by "inauspicious stars," he was burned out by the violence of his own passions. He loved greatly, perhaps "not wisely but too well," and after a brilliant course across the firmament of letters, sank like a falling star. In such a case, we should forget the man and concentrate on the work ; and then it must be acknowledged that his contribution to English verse is worthy and considerable.

BYRON'S POETICAL WORKS

'Hours of Idleness and' 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' : Lord Byron produced a number of works during his life-time. His first volume was a juvenile effort, *Hours of Idleness* (1807). It was more than the elegant trifling of a Lord who made experiments in poetry. It was written when Byron was yet at the University. There is very little poetry in the volume except that it reveals certain aspects of the poet's personality. This work of a frail character was severely criticized and roughly handled by the *Edinburgh Review*. Byron who never lacked spirit, retorted with some effect. He composed a satire in the style of Alexander Pope and called it *English Bards* and *Scotch Reviewers*. It is a vigorous and satirical reply to the criticism and attacks in *The Edinburgh Review*. The poem is immature, being often crudely expressed and it throws abuse recklessly upon good writers and bad; but in the handling of the couplet it already shows some of the Byronic force and pungency.

After the vigorous satire, Byron undertook a travel to Europe and visited the different countries on the Continent. The fruits of his journey came out in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812). The poem was first published in two Cantos, the third Canto was published in 1816, and the fourth Canto in 1818. The entire work seeks to describe the

travels and reflections of a pilgrim who had undertaken the European travel in order to acquaint himself with the ways and manners of the people living in different parts of Europe. The hero of the poem is a romantic youth, and is very clearly Byron himself. *Childe Harold* reflects Byron's views and is, in fact, a copy of the poet who through the vigour of Childe Harold gives his own observation about the life, the people, and the political happenings in different countries of Europe. The first two Cantos take the reader to Portugal, Spain, the Ionian Isles, and Albania, and end with a lament on the slavery of Greece. In the third Canto the pilgrim visits Belgium, the Rhines, the Alps and the Jura. In the fourth Canto, impressions of Italian life are presented with reminiscences about poets of the past, such as Petrarch and Tasso.

Childe Harold is a great poem and represents the picture of Europe in its different aspects. Besides being topographical in character, the poem embodies the reflections and thoughts of the poet about life and human personalities. The poem is diffused but sometimes it is terse and energetic.

Regarding the greatness of the poem, H. F. Tozer remarks : "*Childe Harold* is the greatest of Byron's works. He speaks of it himself, in the dedication prefixed to the fourth Canto, as the longest and the most thoughtful and comprehensive of his Compositions, and this judgment he would hardly have recalled at a later time. Its style is rich, highly coloured, and full of metaphors, the result of teeming fancy....Few poems of the same length are so sustained in interest as *Childe Harold.* This arises partly from the mode of treatment, and partly from the subject itself. It contains elements drawn from all the different branches of poetry. Its continuity is epic, at least in the style of an episodical epic poem like the *Odyssey*, or the *Orlando Furioso* of Arisoto. Its descriptions of scenery and sketches of life and manners are idyllic. A lyric element is contributed by its outbursts of personal feeling. Its rhetorical passages and soliloquies, and the introduction of a supposed auditor, and apostrophising the personages mentioned, are dramatic... *Childe Harold* is also an eminently suggestive poem from the numerous subjects—topographical, historical, biographi-

cal, artistic and literary—which it introduces, and places in the most attractive light. Every point that is touched on, is invested with romance."

Childe Harold brought its author a dower of fame, which in the next few years he was to squander to the uttermost. In the intervals of society functions he produced poetic tales in astonishing profusion: *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* in 1815, *The Corsair and Lara* in 1814, *The Siege of Corinth* in 1815. "These tales deal with the romantic scenes of the East; they almost uniformly reproduce the young Byronic hero of *Childe Harold* and to a great extent they are mannered and stagy. Written in the couplet form, the verse is founded on that of the metrical tales of Scott, whom Byron was not long in supplanting in popular favour although the masculine action in Scott's poems is lacking from his work. Instead there are vehement passions, which give his stories an impetuosity and speed quite different from the easy lucidity of Scott's narrative poems. A vividness of description, based on Byron's own experience of Mediterranean countries, fills them with patches of striking colour, but, though *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, and *Parisinn* are written in a more natural style than *The Corsair* and *Dara*, all reveal the lack of melody, and the unevenness, and, in varying degrees, the artificiality which are typical of Byron's work at this period."

The other poems of Byron are *The Vision of Judgement*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Don Juan*. *The Vision of Judgement* is one of the finest political satires in English literature. It is an attack on the poet Southey. There is bitter indignation, hidden beneath a mask of humorous burlesque and a sparkling, vivacious wit. The poem, which is written in ottava rima, exhibits the same skill which Dryden and Pope had exhibited in the portraiture of the dunces of their times.

In this satire the poet concentrates his attention on the death of George III, who had died in 1821 in a state of blindness, and insanity. In the spring of 1821, the Poet-laureate, Robert Southey, published *A Vision of Judgement* in which he presented the king's entrance to celestial bliss after the end of his earthly journey. Byron was dissatisfied with eulogistic

tone of Sonthey's composition and ridiculed both the poet and the King in *The Vision of Judgement.* In the opinion of Byron, George III had been a political calamity to his country and to mankind, and the funeral had been insincere and theatrical.

It seemed the mockery of hell to fold
The rottenness of eighty years in old.

Archangel Michael and his antagonist, Satan claim George III to their realms and the shy king quietly slips into the fold of heaven like a thief.

"All I saw farther, in the last confusion, was that King George slipped into Heaven for once, when the tumult dwindled to a calm. I left him practising the hundredth psalm."

In this poem the severity of the tone both against the king and the Poet-laureate is well marked out. "The plot enables Byron severely to castigate an official Tory bard and a royal instrument of political oppression". But along with severity there is strange mixture of wit and humour in the poem. "In *The Vision of Judgement*, as in *Don Juan*, he is conspicuously the Whig aristocrat in exile, self-assured, responsible to nobody, reckless, voluble, exuberant, wickedly ironical and deceptively informal."

Beppo : It is a Venetian story, in which the poet tells, in the mock-heroic style, with much gaiety and gentle irony, the story of a Venetian Carnival. As the Carnival party is lost in joy, the Lady's husband, Beppo (short for Giuseppe) returns in Turkish garb and confronts the revelry makers in his room. No tragedy follows. A reconciliation takes place between the wife and the enraged husband over a cup of tea. There are many long digressions in the poem, and a tone of flippancy and irreverence characterizes the entire work.

The Prisoner of Chillon reflects Byron's love for liberty and narrates the experiences of the prisoner in a moving and pathetic strain. It is less a tale than a monologue in which the poet himself speaks in reminiscence. It is a moving tale and is marked with a note of tenderness and sympathy.

Don Juan: In contrast to the tone of *The Prisoner of Chillon* is the mighty vigour of *Don Juan*, the most effective and vigorous satire in the English language. It was begun in 1818 and concluded a few years before the death of the poet. It is Byron's epic satire, reviewing satirically the social, political and economic conditions of the different countries of Europe. It is kind of picaresque novel cast into verse. The hero Don Juan undertakes many wanderings and adventures and his observations find a place in the epic work. The poem records principally six major adventures of its hero. It opens with a description of his childhood and his early love affair with Donna Julia, a married friend of his mother's. When people get a scent of his amorous intrigue, Don Juan is bundled out of the country. He is made to move about in a ship seeking his fortune in some remote land. His ship is wrecked and he has to undergo a great mental suffering in an open boat. In his third adventure, Don Juan starts flirting with Haidee, the daughter of a Greek pirate. The father on his return disapproves of the intrigue between Haidee and Don Juan and Juan is sold by the father of Haidee as a slave in the open market in slavery. He is forced to live in Constantinople, where the Sultan's wife starts loving him. He resists the imperious advances of Gulbeyaz, the Sultan's favourite wife. Juan continues to be a slave for the course of three Cantos, from the fourth to the seventh. He at last manages to escape from Turkey and enlists himself in the army of the Russian, who are the avowed enemies of the Turks. Juan attracts the attention of Empress Catherine II of Russia and he soon becomes the favourite of the queen. His military powers and personal magnetism exercise a hypnotic charm on the queen, and he stays in Russia under her benign patronage till the end of Canto IX. Towards the end of Canto X, the queen initiates his last adventure by despatching him to England on a diplomatic mission. In England Juan freely enjoys English social life. He attracts the attention of three women: Aurora, a young heiress, Adelive, the restless wife of a haughty politician, and the lax and lavish Duchess of Fitz-Fulke. In England the poem

breaks often and Juan is made to come to the end of his adventurous career. If Byron had so desired he could have extended the poem to an infinite length. His letter of 16th February 1821 to John Murray, his publisher, indicates his inclination for prolonging the picaresque work—"To how many Cantos this may be extended, I know not, nor whether (even if I live) I shall complete it ; but this was my notion. I meant to have made him a *Cavalier Servente* in Italy ; and cause for a divorce in England, and a sentimental werther-faced man in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries, and to have displayed him gradually *gate* and *blase* as he grew older as is natural." Don Juan is in fact a sort of picaresque novel in verse and its hero's peregrinations provide Byron with varied opportunities for satirical comedy.

Commenting on *Don Juan*, Trueblood aptly remarks.: "The poem is, in fact, a long peal of scornful laughter flung at that peculiarly British variety of cant which Byron declared was in his day the 'primum mobile' of his countrymen's life, both nationl and private. In his more serious work, Byron is fatally subject to anti-climax. His imagination and his power of phrase are apt to fail him just when they are needed most. In *Don Juan* he turns this defect into a piquant virtue, by deliberately cultivating anti-climax for satiric ends. He drops with startling suddenness from the serious to the trivial, from impassioned poetry to mocking verse. The device is simple one, but Byron uses it with a variety and rest truly wonderful, and secures by means of it an effect of cynical nonchalance which is a triumph of its kind."

Of the verse of *Don Juan* Swinburne has written with perhaps a touch of exaggeration : " Across the stanzas of *Don Juan* we swim forward as over the broad backs of the sea. They break and glitter, hiss and laugh, murmur and move like waves that sound or that subside. There is in them a delicious resistance, an elastic motion which salt water has and fresh has not. There is about them a wide wholesome air full of vivid light and constant wind which is only felt at sea". The entire

work flows with ease and naturalness of Byron's conversation as described by Colonel Stanhope: "a stream sometimes smooth, sometimes rapid, sometimes rushing down in cataracts.—a mixture of philosophy and slang of everything."

Dramatic Works of Byron: Besides writing these works in poetry, Byron also composed dramas in blank verse. All his plays are blank verse tragedies. The chief are *Manfred* (1817) *Marino Falieiry* (1821), *The Two Foscari and Cain* (1821) and *The Deformed Transformed* 1824. In nearly all we have a hero of the Byronic type. In *Cain*, for example, we have the outcast who defies the censure of the world; in *The Deformed Transformed* there are thinly screened references to Byrons own deformity. In this fashion he showed that he had little of the real dramatic faculty, for he could portray no character with any zeal unless it resembles himself. The blank verse has power and dignity but it lacks the higher poetic inspiration. But as Professor Herford says, "In passing from description to drama, Byron instantly betrayed the rhetorical quality of his imagination. In passing from rhyme to blank verse he betrayed still more the limits of his sense of melody, for no poet of comparable rank ever wrote verse so unutterably blank."

CHAPTER II

BYRON'S PERSONALITY AND REPUTATION

Although we have discussed the life of Byron in detail in the first chapter, yet it seem quite advisable to explore some more aspects of his personality, so as to enable the students to appreciate his works with a better understanding, since his works are completely coloured with the likes and dislikes of Byron the man.

PERSONALITY

General : Byron's character was a strange mixture of opposite extremes. It was, as he himself said of Burns, a curions compound of "tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling—dirt and deity—all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay". Such a nature obviously defies the most careful analysis. Hence the widely-divergent—if not altogether contradictory—estimates of his character that have come down to us from those who have had opportunities of knowing him. To one he is an archangel ; to another a very devil. Those who have no means of judging his character except from his works, have pronounced equally contradictory verdicts ; but the consensus of opinion seems to be that his character was one calculated more to give warning then to offer guidance.

In passing judgment on Byron's private character, certain important cautions should be borne in mind. First, we should not attach much value to what he has said of himself. He was naturally very garrulous, incapable not only of keeping a secret but also of restraining himself from running into exaggerations. He always wore his heart upon his sleeve, and no wonder, daws should have pecked at it. It has been said that the only fair way of estimating character

is according to the criterion of environment. If this is accepted, we should not judge harshly of a poet who descended from a long line of illustrious ancestors, found his lot cast in the midst of a society of which the notorious Prince Regent was the acknowledged head. Another extenuating circumstance may perhaps be found in the fact that "Byron's life was passed under the fierce light that beats upon an intellectual throne," with the inevitable result of blackening every blot. It cannot also be denied that what Mr. Nichol calls the "microscope of malice" has often been employed by personal enemies to magnify defects that would perhaps have otherwise escaped notice.

Licentiousness : Of all charges, those of licentiousness and insincerity have been most persistently brought against Byron. There is no doubt that, judged even by the low standard of his age, he was given to vice. No age will forgive his relations with the Countess Guiccioli, or Miss Clairmont, who bore him a daughter, named Allegra. But perhaps some allowance may be made for the fact that "his passions were seldom unaccompanied by affectionate emotions, genuine while they lasted."[1] We must also pay some regard to the poet's own solemn declaration that he never was the first means of leading anyone astray.[2] It is noteworthy also that, with such little restraint over his passions, he was always very temperate in his food and drink.

Insincerity : The other charge—of insincerity—is less serious, and can be more easily refuted. It has been said that Byron was false from top to toe, that he loved pre-eminence in evil, that he was fond of representing himself as one who had suffered intolerable wrong, who had some secret tormenting thought within his breast, which he would not reveal, or would only half-reveal, to others. It is of course true that Byron constantly speaks of himself as the "wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," as one "most unfit of men to herd with man," as one haunted evermore by the "demon thought," and so on ; but all this is nevertheless perfectly sincere. Byron's was a genuine poetic tem-

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1. Nichol's 'Byron.
2. Ibid.

perament ; he felt keenly whatever he felt, even though the feeling may have had a false origin in fact. But this is not insincerity : at worst it is a mere delusion. The charge of insincerity vanishes as soon as we turn from the poet's *words* to his *work*.

Liberality : As a friend, no one could be more sincere, more faithful, more constant, than Byron. Moore, his most careful biographer, says that throughout life "he never lost a friend." His private letters are full of sympathy, affection and frank dealing. He was the idol of those who came most frequently into contact with him. Fletcher, his valet, regarded him as a father and a god, rather than a master.He was kind even to the foolish, half-mad Polidari.[1] His liberality was well known among his contemporaries. He gave away large sums of money to the ungrateful Dallas. For many years he refused to accept any remuneration for the copyright of his poems, and when obliged to do so under pressure, he bestowed it frequently upon friends. His hospitality to Leigh Hunt and his large family has been misrepresented by the ungrateful guest, but remains nevertheless a notable instance of that princely virtue. The ungrudging help he rendered to Coleridge, the loan of £4,000 he advanced to Shelley, the gift of another £1,000 made to Hodgson, are among other instances that may be quoted. His gifts in support of the Greek cause were truly munificent. Just before his death he writes that he had spent 30,000 dollars on the Greeks in three months. At another time he writes : "I am maintaining nearly the whole machine, in this place at least, at my own cost."

Generosity : As an enemy, Byron was a generous as he was warm-hearted as a friend. It is true that in attacking the bards and reviewers of his age, he was sometimes disposed to be harsh in his language ; but he never bore any real rancour towards the worst of his foes. And as for the satire itself, Byron frequently altered or recanted his remarks, sometimes in marginal notes, sometimes in subsequent editions of the poem. Scott, whom he had lashed most severely of all, became afterwards his most affectionate friend. He quickly forgave Murray for refusing to under-

1. *Nichol*, pages 104 *et seq*.

take the publication of *Don Juan*. Except in his references to his wife, he was scarcely ever guilty of meanness in speech or conduct.

Egotism and misanthropy : The most conspicuous trait of Byron's character has, for want of a better word, been called "Byronism," a term first made current by Carlyle. "Byronism" may be defined as a constant profession of cynical contempt for the world, together with a pale concern for the world's opinion. Byron holds, in the manner of Hamlet, that "the time is out of joint," and curses the destiny that brought him into the world. From a very early age he assumed the character of Timon ; and to the last he stuck to it.

"I have not loved the world, nor the world me"

forms the burden of his songs. Misanthropy seems somewhat strange in the mouth of a promising young man, endowed with brilliant talents and surrounded by the halo of birth and rank. But in Byron the cause of it was not far to seek. He had a physical deformity which prevented him from taking his share in the ordinary sports of his age. He hated others because he thought they were jeering at him, when really they but envied him. He repaid scorn with scorn, and thought the British public was peering into his private affairs far more than it ever really cared to do.

Ridden with sense of superiority : Byron was an aristocrat by descent and temperament. He traced descent from ancestors who came with William the Conqueror. And still beyond that he claimed descent from the Vikings. He was always proud of this. He claimed, however, double superiority—"of a lord among wits and a wit among lords". in spite of his theoretical objection to duelling he was ever ready to take up a challenge and readier still to send one.

The true aristocrat is one who is always canscious of the vital distinction between himself and "the much of the world." Byron extended the aristocratic individualism even to his own class. Himself steeped into the prejudices of his class, he at times struck at them with a fatal force. He hated vulgarity more than anything else. Though a democrat

in political beliefs, he was never "of the people". His last interest in Greece was perhaps due to the fact that it was the land of "classic memories" where "a man might be the champion of liberty without soiling his hands." And like a true aristocrat Byron could exercise self-control, when he chose. In the sense he had more self-control, perhaps, than any of the great romantics.

Supreme example of "romantic dissatisfaction." Byron may be taken as the supreme example of "romantic dissatisfaction." A peer, proud of his descent, he was the poet of revolt and satirist of aristocracy ; "an aristocrat in sentiment and a democrat in opinion." In London Society he yearned for a desert or a lonely island. Separated from his wife, he yearned for her. In exile he felt the call of his Newstead home. A great romantic, he admired Pope. "Neither time," wrote the poet of *Corsair and Lara*, "nor distance, nor grief, nor age can ever diminish my admiration for him......"

Though Byron affected dislike for the world, he cared too much for it. Without society he found it difficult to live. He loved solitude only by way of change. As Shelley has told us whenever Byron went he became the "nucleus of society." This romantic poet was "a man of the world also, with a strong practical vein in his nature. At heart he was a society gentleman."

Urge for passionate self-expression : Urge for passionate self-expression was an inner law of Byron's being. Edward Morris says that Byron "never separated his poetry from his own private history". He appears almost on every page he wrote. Other poets suppress their unpleasant experiences. Byron could only work them off by putting them into a poem. He put his half sister Augusta in gravely embarrassing position by printing her praises in spite of the charges of incest laid against him. In *The Dream* he related the marriage and later insanity of Mary Chaworth. It may be said that Byron did not spare himself either. In brief Byron "hid nothing, extenuated nothing." In fact the energy of Byron's poetry comes from this passion of self-revelation.

Political views : Byron's love of liberty was perhaps the

most dominant of all his emotions ; but the goddess he adored was not the same as Tennyson worshipped under the name of Freedom. Byron's Liberty (or freedom—for he uses the two terms indiscriminately) is what Tennyson has characterized as "schoolboy heat, the blind hysterics of the Celt." It was not—

> "freedom slowly broadening down
> From precedent to precedent,"

—but freedom as apostrophised in the following well-known address :—

> "Yet Freedom ! yet thy banner, torn but flying,
> Streams, like the thunderstorm, *against* the wind ;
> Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
> The loudest still the tempest leaves behind ;
>
> [—*Childe Harold* IV, 98.]

This love of liberty was, however, an essential doctrine of his political creed. He vehemently denounced all forms of oppression, even when he had no great faith in the oppressed. He regarded the established dynasties of the continent with a sincere hatred, and approved of the republican form of government alone. "Give me a republic"—he says somewhere—"Look in the history of the earth—Rome, Greece, Venice, Holland, France, America, our own too short Commonwealth—and compare it with what they did under masters." It was quite natural therefore that he should take the Liberal side in politics. But his share in the strife of English political parties was very slight. In international politics he was disgusted with the line taken by England in opposing Napoleon; and, though not quite always, he usually poses as an admirer of the French Emperor, and avails himself of every opportunity to attack the Duke of Wellington. His love of liberty or (what amounts to the same) hostility to tyranny, led him to participate in the Greek War of Independence and the movement in favour of Italian union.

Religious views: Nothing has caused greater offence to his readers than Byron's views on religion; and yet he was a

sceptic rather than an atheist, and herein lies the chief point of difference between him and Shelley. He himself has declared that he was no atheist; but he nevertheless displays an attitude of hostility towards the Christian religion. This was due partly to disgust at his Calvinistic training, partly to affectation of wickedness, and partly to a revulsion against the hypocrisy of professing Christianity. Throughout his life he was a constant reader of the Bible, and took a learned interest in theological questions; but he seems to have rejected Christianity as a divine revelation, though he admired the spirituality of its doctrines, and the loftiness of its moral precepts. But he certainly did believe in a personal God, though his tone is often pantheistic.

Popularity abroad : But this was only so far as his private character was concerned: in his poetic character he remained true to his creed, and stood forth as the champion of freedom to all the nations of the earth. This accounts for Byron's popularity in foreign countries. He is believed to have been the first Englishman who made English literature known throughout Europe. "He is believed to have largely influenced the revolutionary movement in Germany, and he gave a direct stimulus to the liberators of Italy. Such stormful and melancholy poetry as his must always be at the height of popularity in times of conflict. The disturbed state of the continent is more favourable to its spirit than the piping times of peace which have prevailed for a generation in England. Men who are content with the old things, and men who renounce old things with a light heart, can have little affinity with his deep-rooted sadness, his pride of defiant struggle, his flashes of defiant merriment; all this seems hysterical, affected and unreal—and unreal it no doubt is, in the sense that the feelings of men under the tension of conflict must appear full of false notes to men who look on out of a normal condition of settled tranquillity."

REPUTATION

Popularity : Describing Byron as a mourner of Keats, Shelley writes in *Adonais*:—

> The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
> Over his living head like Heaven is bent
> An early but enduring monument.

Byron became the most famous personality of his age so that "to be loved or even to be hated by Byron meant a world-wide publicity". Adored and hated by turns he was feared and respected as "the Napoleon of the realm of rhyme". His works were immensely popular. Seven editions of Canto I and II of *Childe Harold* were sold in four weeks. Byron himself exclaimed, "I woke one morning and found myself famous." Byron was quick enough to perceive what his public wanted and fulfilled this want in his verse stories. Fourteen thousand copies of *Corsair* were sold in a day. *Giaour* ran into fourteen editions in three years. None of the works of the other romantics achieved popularity approaching this.

Byron's works were European events and were translated into French, German, Italian, Danish, Polish, Russian and Spanish languages. Goethe said of him, "A character of such eminence has never existed before, and probably will never come again......undoubtedly the greatest genius of our century." Goethe paid Byron the unique tribute of introducing him as Euphorion—Child of Helen and Faust (or Hellenism and Renaissance)—in second part of *Faust*. Taine remarked, "Byron attains the summit." Castelar asks, "What does Spain not owe to Byron ? "

In fact it was Byron's love of liberty, expressed both in verse and actions, that gave him his tremendous popularity on the continent. The significance of Byron's passionate protest for liberty was enhanced by the fact that it came from one who was an aristocrat of ancient descent. His glory was only less than Goethe's. Byron influenced most of the literature of Europe in the years following his death. His tremendous influence from Spain to Russia was a historical fact. Elton say, "It would take a syndicate of scholars to describle his influence." Explaning the various reasons of his popularity. Bowra has observed in his book, *The Romantic Imagination* : "His European reputation was already great in his lifetime and has not been seriously shaken since. Just as Goethe regarded him as the 'greatest genius of the century' and said : 'He is not antique and not modern ; he is like the present day', so Mazzini said : "He gave a European role

to English poetry, He led the genius of England on a pilgrimage through Europe.

"This reputation was matched by an influence no less remarkable. There was hardly a country whose leading poets in the thirties and forties of nineteenth century were not in some sense Byronic, in their rejection of established systems, their aggressive self-assertion, their love of liberty, and their cult of love. When Russian poetry found its first full strength about 1820, Byron was its chief model and its most powerful inspiration. To him Pushkin owed not only the ideas and the form of such poems as *The Prisoner of the Causcasus* and *Poltava* but intended his *Evgeny Onegin* to be a Russian counterpart of *Don Juan*; and if there was ever a case of nature imitating art, it can be seen in the startling resemblances between Lermontov and Byronic heroes. From Byron, Lermontov learned to speak of himself as he really was, in his strange contradictions of affection and hatred of delight and boredom, of sentiment and irony, of love of society and love of solitude. Throughout Europe poet looked to Byron because he had given voice to something which they recognised and praised in themselves. Of course, his fame was all the greater because he died heroically for the liberation of Greece. But that was fortuitous, what mattered was that he put into poetry something that belonged to many men in his time, and that he was a pioneer of a new outlook and a new art. He set his mark on a whole generation, and his fame rang from one end of Europe to another.

"In his own country Byron's reputation was quite different. In his life time he was not admired by his reverend seniors. Wordsworth not only thought his style very slovenly but regarded him as 'a monster......a man of genius whose heart is perverted.' Though Coleridge did not scruple to enlist Byron's support in getting his plays acted, he had no high opinion of his work and thought his later poetry 'Satanic.' Even Keats, who was much less prejudiced than Wordsworth and Coleridge, dismissed *Don Juan* as 'Lord Byron's last flash poem,' and was outraged by its description of a storm at sea.

"In both the European and the English views of Byron there is a mixture of truth and error. Goethe, Mazzini, Pushkin, and others were right to see in Byron the representative of a new age. When the French Revolution broke the equilibrium on which the civilization of the eighteenth century had rested, a new type of man came into existence, and Byron was the supreme example of it in his rejection of established ties, his cult of the self, his love of adventure, and his ironical distrust of his own emotions and beliefs. He was an aristocratic rebel when aristocrats were leaders of new movements and new ideas. In him the poet became a man of action because the creative spirit, long discouraged and constricted, found that words alone were not enough for it, and that it must display itself in generous gesture and gallant risk. At the same time, Byron's continental admirers did not distinguish the false from the true in his work or his personality. They were so fascinated by his early poems that they continued to praise them even when he had begun to compose in different and more truly creative spirit. The dream worlds of escape in his early romances answered a dissatisfaction in many men, who accepted as great poetry what was in fact often false or feeble. Until he left England for the second and last time, Byron lacked the experience which alone could make his subjects convincing, and though he dallied with romantic notions, he did not really believe in them and for that reason was not master of them. Much of Byron's earlier poetry is deficient both in art and in truth. It did indeed open new prospects, and it is extraordinary what passionate sincerity of a great genius like Pushkin could make of them. But many others were so entranced by Byron's poses that they were content to write a poetry of pose and it is this, more than anything else which is so disturbing in much that was written in Latin countries during the Romantic age. The Byronic affectations were ubiquitous, but they are usually neither attractive nor convincing, and even when they are embodied in a man of real talents, they remain an obstacle to our full enjoyment of his work.

"Byron's English critics misjudged him in a different

way. If Wordsworth and Coleridge were so shocked by his morals that they were blind to the merits of his poetry the same cannot be said of Keats. Keats condemned Byron because their conceptions of poetry were different, and the chief difference lay in their opposite views of the part to be played by the imagination. In Blake's view, Byron's error is to follow Nature instead of the Imagination."

Unpopularity : Byron became unpopular in his country as suddenly as he had become popular. The fact that he was a nobleman had helped to make him hated. The English society had, as Macaulay said, one of its "periodical fits of morality." It did not stop to think of the rights and wrongs of his quarrels with his wife. As Quiller Couch puts it. "He was suddenly exposed to a change of which he could not even learn the particulars." Those who are interested in the matter may find in A. Moreau's book on Byron an authoritative treatment of the charge of incest against the poet.

In the Victorian age the influence of Carlyle told heavily against Byron's cynicism and merely a destructive aim. To this was added the influence of Tennyson's example which went against Byron's frequently careless craftsmanship and lack of that philosophical morality which Tennyson taught his age to expect in poetry.

CHAPTER III

BYRON AS A ROMANTIC POET

Distinction between romanticism and classicism : We shall find, no matter what books of literary histories we consult, that they describe Byron as a "Romantic Poet." It is well, before proceeding, to have some idea of what that means. In the case of drama, the classical writers were those who modelled their plays of the pre-Christian era, and sought to make them fit into a certain model or shape. The romantic dramatists recognized no restrictions or "unities" of time or place or story, but retained absolute freedom to use a myriad of different methods. That, however, does not apply to non-dramatic verse.

In the century before Byron, there was a period after the death of Milton when poets came under the spell of certain conventions. They were not definitely expressed or laid down, but a glance at the poetry of Pope will show that most of it is polite and clever comment on society and current affairs. The classical poet is interested in the thing which he is describing, whether it be a fact of Nature or an event of man's life. His own emotions are carefully suppressed, and he becomes a clever drawer or describer. In the whole of Pope's faultless and correct lines, brimful of smartness, there is little imagination, little emotion. His horse is a quiet and well-trained animal, ambling along under full control, absolutely reliable.

The romantic poet, on the other hand, cares more for the emotion to be derived from the subject. To him, emotion is the most important factor in his lines, the deep feelings of the heart to be shown to the reader. In other words, romantic poetry depends on intense subjective emotion, while classical verse relies on faithful presentation of the subject. One is personal; the other is impersonal. The romantic poet is in a rapture, an ecstasy, and tries to savour

all the emotion gradations that are to be derived from anything. He seeks to glorify and exalt, by the alchemy of his rich imagination, even the prosaic things of life. The classical poet deals with things as they are, leaving us to derive from them what lesson we can.

This is not a hard and fast classification, but is an effort to show the basic distinction between classical and romantic poetry. Literature cannot be divided up into separate classes clearly distinct from each other. A writer may be classical and romantic in the same poem, as the spirit moves him. *Paradise Lost* has many aspects of classical tradition, but if we consider its lofty flights of imagination into realms beyond reality, it is highly romantic. It is doubtful whether the poetry of the 18th century in England truly earns the term "classical", so often bestowed on it. Pope is the leader, and while he soars with middle flight—if indeed he can be said to soar—he is never dull. Others of his age have little depth of feeling and are not true to life. Their thought and expression are artificial, carefully correct, and devoid of inspiration. Pope achieved a kind of glitter, but it rose mainly from a spiteful cleverness and not from the fine frenzy of poetic inspiration. His expression and diction were always correct, but he had not deep feeling to impart and thrill.

This polite, well-mannered commentary on society, on manners and on politics, which served the public in the 18th century inevitably ceased to attract. There was a reaction against this conventional and mechanical type of writing, this limitation to the present in time and place. Men felt that the poets were staying too much at home, like the domestic fowls scratching about the house and never envying the lofty flight of eagle above them. The present is mostly dull, and the surroundings in which one moves every day tend to become monotonous and uninteresting. The task of the romantic poet is to break outside those limits, to transport men to other worlds in time and space.

The reaction started which some have called the Romantic revolt. Crabbe and Cowper showed the signs of that revolt, but it is usually dated from Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth called men away from the mundane affairs of society to the contemplation of external Nature,

the beauty that exists in the woods and the trees and the waters. He ended by discovering God in Nature. Coleridge took away from the reality of the prosaic present into the world of the supernatural; the ancient mariner is at the mercy of forces which man cannot measure, and in *Kubla Khan* we glimpse the world of spirit. In their turn, all succeeding writers tried a different way of escape from the present. Scott's verse romances revived the old-time history of Scotland, with the waving of tartans and the clash of broadwords on the heather. Ruskin, as a prose writer, tried to revive the beauties of old Gothic archi tecture. Morris and Mathew Arnold went for romance to the old classical literature. The man who feels his daily life prosaic, who feels that "The world is too much with him," yearns in his inner self for adventure, for stirring deeds and valorous exploits. That is the basic urge in human nature; it sets the schoolboy to the study of dedective tales, and the city clerk to the reading of stories about cowboys in the wild West,—unless he watches them on the screen. Byron found in his European travels a rich supply of folk-lore, legend and ballad, the very substance for romantic writing. That is why his *Bride of Abydos*, *Childe Harold* and *The Giaour* have appeal. They all take men away from reality into a coloured and attractive world of the mind. This is romance, the same in the four-anna detective tale as in *Childe Harold*.

Byron was one of the romantic poets of the day, and his verse romances were in competition with Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* and *Lay of the Last Ministrel*. But Byron had vastly different views from those of Wordsworth and Coleridge. He lashed the genial Wordsworth cruelly in *English Bards*, as the man

"Who warns his friends to shake off toil and trouble,
And quit their books for fear of growing double."

Nothing could be more cutting than this parody of Wordsworth's own words. Byron was a great admirer of Pope and those who surrounded him. The praise which Byron applies to Pope and his colleagues, in the course of this quarrel, are startling in their extravagance. "Neither

time nor distance, nor age nor sorrow" he says, speaking of Pope, "can ever diminish my veneration for him who is the great moral poet of all times...Your whole generation are not worth a canto of the *Dunciad* or anything that is his." Pope's poetry is a 'Grecian temple,' he says elsewhere, and he hints that the moderns were engaged in defacing that temple.

This extravagant estimate of Pope and his party, and this under-estimate of the poetry of himself and his contemporaries is but another instance of those contradictions in the outer details of Byron's life as well as in his work and character. He was handsome like Apollo and cursed with a club-foot, the inheritor of a noble name and an empty exchequer, an aristocrat by birth and a democrat by tendencies; a man of the sweetest and most lovable disposition by nature and yet haunted with a mania for appearing sour and cynical. And as it was in life, so was it with his literary judgment and literary practice. No one aired more absurd views and theories about literature and no one violated these theories more gloriously in practice.

BYRON AS A ROMANTIC PARADOX

Byron a creature of instinct : "Macaulay has said that personal taste led him to the 18th century-thirst for praise to the 19th." A poet is something different from a mechanical versifier; he must write out according to his real nature; according to his personal taste; his genious will compel him to do so. If Byron's personal taste had really inclined him to 18th century, he would have written after the manner of the 18th century as he actually did in *English Bards* and still more in the *Hints from Horace*. But a surer, wiser, and truer instinct, his *real* personal taste, led him to abandon this track and to give full vent to the wild and impetuous promptings of his nature. And hence we get from him some forceful and highly coloured romance of an entirely new order. It was inevitable. Byron, like Burns, was a born rebel, and was always ready to challenge authority. Like the Irishman who was asked what his political party was, Byron was "Against" the Government." This inborn spirit of independence and opposition made him resent all formal

canons of literary criticism, so that he was sure to find himself in the camp of the rebel romantists.

Differences between Byron and the authentic romantics It is a fact that Byron differed from other accredited Romantic poets—Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Scott and Southey, in his method and practice as a poet. Profoundly touched at certain points by romanticism Byron was never a poet of romanticism in the sense that Shelley, Scott and Coleridge were. Like Wordsworth and Southy, Byron was deeply touched by its influences at one moment, but was far away at the next.

What fascinated the romantic poets were imagination and a love for fairy romance and dreamy lands of medievalism. Either the romantic poets dwelt in the world of the past through their power of imagination as did Keats, or they were visionary idealists like Shelley conjuring up pictures of the future. In any case in the works of the romantics, we come across a free-play of the imaginative power. But in Byron's poetry there is little of that imaginativeness and reflectiveness which we find in Shelley or Keats. Byron is essentially the poet of instinct rather than of imagination. To quote Quennel, "In his work, as in his life, he was a creature of instinct. Few men have gone through existence with less faith in the validity of the human will." Goethe says, "Byron possessed a high degree of that demonaic instinct and attraction which influences others independently of reason, effect or affection which sometimes succeeds where the understanding fails." With his adoration of instinct rather than of imagination, Byron could not be a romantic poet like the imaginative Shelley or Keats. He gave up the romantic view of imagination and adopted a new realistic art and that is why "On the central article of the romantic creed, the importance of the Imagination, Byron is regarded as a heretic by such good judges as Keats and Burke, and he would not have denied the accusation."

Byron, a realist—The Romantic poets, except perhaps the idealistic Shelley, were not interested in realism and the description of the actual as it was. Wordsworth wandered like a cloud over hills and dales to know the mysteries of Nature;

Coleridge wrought his weird dreams and was wrecked in the mist of opium; Scott with his pen lifted the veil that kept shrouded the enchanting past of the country; Shelley wore out his myths and remained wrapped up in his visions and wished to be "the trumpet of prophecy", and even Keats sought his heart in Gothic arches, Grecian urns and inns. It was Byron who was of the earth and wedded to the actual realities of the mundane world, Byron scorned to leave his times and as Symons affirms, "He loved the world for its own sake and for good and evil". "Shelley moves among the clouds," says Prof. Grierson. "Byron never quits the earth. From first to last he is concerned with realities and nothing but realities, mundane realities, real persons and scenes and happenings." His realism sometimes becomes too gross, and nauseating and then we are tempted to adopt Pope's line on Defoe for Byron, "Earless on high stands unabashed Byron." It is this realism of Byron so passionately touched and expressed in *Don Juan* that separates and distinguishes him from other romantic poets. "Of all the great poets of the time Byron presents the peculiar and piquant combination of an ardent romantic imagination and an intellect and outlook essentially worldly and matter-of-fact. With Keats it was the the past, with Shelley the future, with Byron it was the present that really interests and grips him. His ardent fancy dallied with the past on occasions; but he is most at home with the England of his day, the Europe of his day, its social hypocrises, its literary conventions and affectations. He is always at heart a society gentleman, and both in its good and bad sense, a man of the world." His *Don Juan* is an epic of the age as it gives a panoramic view of contemporary life, and in the poetic searchlight turned on several facts of actual life we discover a wide range of the poet's tastes and the wonderful varieties of his response to experience. It was Byron's object in poetry to be a realist rather than an imaginative romanticist. In *Don Juan* XII he says:

> I mean to show things really as they are,
> Nor as they ought to be, for I know;
> That till we see what's what in fact, we're far
> From much improvement.

Like Alexander Pope, Byron too believed that by *stooping* to it he was moralizing his song. "The truth to which Byron stoops is a matter of fidelity to what he believe to be observable facts. Accordingly, he more than once expresses a sceptic's impatience with metaphysical and theological speculation. In all this he aligns himself rather with his Augustan predecessors than with his romantic contemporary."

Essentially a satirist like the 18th century Poets :— Byron's genius was essentially satirical like the classical poets of the XVIII century, and he found greater delight in following their mode and method than toeing the essential romantic dreaminess and visionary idealism. Pope and Gifford attracted him most and he had a great respect for Pope's *Dunciad* and Gifford's *Beviad* and *Meviad*. His main works are satirical in content like the works of the classical poets of the 18th century. He is said to have loved and liked his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* much more than his *Childe Harold*, because it is purely eighteenth century in spirit. *The English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* is a complete triumph of Byronic classicism, and this high spirited satire is indeed the *Dunciad* of romanticism. With this satirical affinity with the XVIII century poets, Byron gets further away from the Romanticism of Wordsworth and Keats. Byron's attachment with the classical poets of the XVIII century was very strong ; and Moorman nicely states how Byron was all for classicism and the 18th century. He says, "When the romantic principles of the new school seemed everywhere triumphant, Byron came forward as the dauntless champion of Pope, and when he essayed drama, he turned his back upon Shakespeare and sat at the feet of Alfeei. He never wholly broke away from the Augustan poetic diction."

Byron differs from the authentic romantics not merely in his low estimate of the imagination but in the peculiar quality and power of his wit. The world of the Regency pursued its pleasure in an atmosphere of malice and mockery, and Byron had his fair share of both. His emotions and intelligence were at war, and through wit he found some sort of reconciliation between them."

Byron exploited whole range of his feelings with a variety of tastes and experiences : Byron differed from his Romantic contemporaries in the complex character of his response to experience. In his earlier poetry he had tried to look at things from almost a single point of view, but in *Don Juan* he abandoned this and exploited the whole range of his feelings. Whereas other romantics tended to follow a single principle in their approach to life, Byron followed his own wayward changing moods. Like the romantic his nature could not be confined to one single channel. He had a variety of tastes and responses. He had an omnivorous taste for experience and tried most things that came his way. The result is that his great poem *Don Juan* provides a vivid and searching commentary on the contemporary rescue.

But in spite of his differences with the romantic poets, Byron was the child of his age and he did not abandon romanticism completely. "Though Byron abandoned Romantic view of the imagination and practised a new realistic art," says Bowra, "he did not altogether abandon some themes and ideas which meant most to the romantics." Like the romantics he had a deep and intense love for nature, freedom, passion, melancholy and romance. He felt that matters like nature and love were sufficient in themselves to inspire poetry, and he need not look beyond them for something else. Like the other romantics he was attracted towards Rousseau and Chateaubrand. He was more revolutionary than Shelley, the most romantic poet among the romantics. He was more typical of his time than either Wordsworth or Shelley, for while their outlooks were limited by their private philosophies, Byron absorbed the life around him and expressed what thousands of his contemporaries felt. That is why Arnold spoke of him as "The greatest elemental power in English Literature since Shakespeare." The note of romanticism is pointedly sounded by Byron in such verses as *I would I were a careless child, I roved a young Highlander* and the justly famous *Lachiny Gair*. The influence of Macpherson's *Ossian* is very strong in *The Death of Calmar and Orla*, and blends with that of the ballad poets in *Oscar of Alva*. The lyrics and the elegiac poems also present Byron's romanticism. The melancholic poems of Byron are

saturated in the romantic tradition, and the same strain can be felt in quite a large number of stanzas in *Childe Harold*. The love for freedom which characterized romantic poets is equally well present in Byron's poetry, and in certain respects he was more revolutionary than Shelley.

Referring to the romantic peculiarity of Byrons Bowra says, "From an European point of view, he is the chief exponent and most renowned figure of the whole movement, the man who summed up in himself its essential qualities and by his inspiring example imposed them on the civilized world. From the usual English point of view he is hardly a Romantic at all, but survival from the 18th century and an enemy of much that the true romantics thought most holy."

Conclusion : Taking all these factors into account we cannot deny to Byron a place among the romantics. He had his love and likings for Pope and the classical poets of the 18th century, but nonetheless he was an elemental force among the romantic poets of the 19th century. Even if Byron joined hands with the classicists and the Augustans, there was a difference between the classicism of Pope and the classicism of Byron. "The invocation to Pope and Dryden in the last stanza compels us to recall the difference between their Augustanism and Byron's. Pope and Dryden seen characteristically to write as the spokesmen of a coherent and civilized social group. The members of this may not hold identical religious social, political and other lebels, but they do share, and their poets share ; a deep respect for the fundamental Augustan virtues of goods sense, reasonableness and moderation. Byron writes with an equally keen awareness of his public, and he writes likewise as an exponent of good sense. But, so far from seeming to feel his public sustaining him, he evidently draws very much more exclusively on his own resources, and even at times has to defy what he supposes to be a canting, a moralistic and sensibilitious world."

For these reasons Byron is sometimes called as a Romantic puzzle or the Romantic paradox.

CHAPTER IV

BYRON AS A SATIRIST IN VERSE

General comments upon Byron as a satirist : Byron was one of the most vigorous and powerful satirists of England during the 19th century. His genius was neither inclined towards the lyrical nor the dramatic side. In satire he found the suitable medium forhis rebelism and passionate nature and it is in satire that he turned most joyously from the early years of his life. He had a great liking for Alexander Pope, the prince of satirists in the 18th century and for Gifford, his worthy successor. He closely imitated their form and style in his satires, and almost all the satirical works of Byron were written under the influence of Pope, Gifford and Swift.

Nichol says, "From boyhood battle was the breath of his being...... To tell[1] him not to fight was like telling Wordsworth not to reflect on Shelley nor to sing." In his poetry of satire Byron waged a perpetual battle against human roguery. He felt that the England of his day was a prison-house of ignorance, self-complaisance. "He shook this citadel of ignorance to its foundations." In other words, "he died, as he lived, in the progress of an unaccomplished campaign." His later work is the severest satire ever produced on a great nation.

Though himself an aristocrat proud of his descent, Byron waged a relentless war against aristocracy, its ideals, privileges and its doings in society and politics. His experience of Regency Society during his immense popularity (1812-16) and equally bitter unpopularity made Byron see what lay behind its whitewashed facade. In this society

1. Madame de Stael is reported to have said to Byron : "It does not do to war with the world; the world is too strong for the individual."

Byron found formalities of religion without real faith, hope or charity ; an abundance of sham, affectation, falsehood, insincerity and selfish living combined with shallow thinking. In the conventions and morality of the society, that had hounded him out of England he found no reason or sincerity. He revolted against all this and turned into a satirist of the judges of 1816. He "became the deadliest denouncer" of orthodoxy and corruption and hypocrisy prevailing during the Regency. Henceforward it was his task to arraign spiritual bankrupcty and wickedness of high life. It would be wrong to deny moral earnestness to the post-exile satire of Byron. At the basis of Byron's satire lies his refusal to recognize the authority of a social court which he asserted to be the representative of cant and corruption. Against conventional religion, conventional political beliefs, the arbitrary ethical code, and the greed for enjoyment in the higher class, Byron directed his satire relentlessly. In short, all that his age pretended to feel sacred he did not spare. Like Shelley, Byron was at war with the world, but he was far more effective fighter than Shelley. Byron's attacks on the Holy Alliance were much better understood than Shelley's wrath against 'enthroned kings' and Christ."

A Brief Survey of Byron's Satirical Works

"Hours of Idleness" and "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."—Byron may be said to have started his career as a poet with satire when he was a student in the University. This work is known as *Hours in Idleness*. It was severely criticised for its immaturity and thoughtlessness in the *Edinburgh Review*. Byron did not take the offence lying down, but dashed out against his critics with a great vigour in his satirical work, *The English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Here Byron expressed himself as a strong avenger of his wrongs in the following words :—

> And though I hope not hence unscathed to go
> Who conquer me shall find a stubborn foe.

In this poem Byron's model was Pope, the author of *Dunciad*. That is why it (*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*) is called the *Dunciad* of Romanticism. Byron gives,

in this poem, a series of caricatures of most of the literary personages of his day with much gusto and enthusiasm. But it should be noted that Byron had neither Pope's finish of satire nor his malice. To the satire couched in the heroic couplet, Byron, to quote Hough, "adds nothing to the tradition except the impress of a new personality, a certain careless arrogance that was to be the note of so much of his best work." His target is the school of Lake-poets, Southey and Wordsworth are particularly satirized by Byron. The constant use of 'Pedlars', 'Boats', 'Waggons' in Wordsworth's poetry, particularly in *Excursion* irritates Byron and he satirically bemoans the fall of English poetry from the heights of Pope and Dryden to the banality of Wordsworth :

> 'Pedlars' and 'Boats' and 'Waggons' ! Oh, ye, shades
> Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this ?
> That trash of such sort not alone evades
> Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
> Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades
> Of sense and song above your grave may hiss
> The 'little boatman' and his Peter Bell
> Can sneer at him who drew Achitophel.

"Hints from Horace" and "Curse of Minerva" : Byron's next works in satire are *Hints from Horace*, and *Curse of Minerva*. In both these satires, Byron, in the words of Oliver Elton, "is a young tiger cub lashing out with sharp and clumsy claws."

"Beppo": Then came Beppo in 1818, and from the time of its composition, realism became the master-bias of Byron's mind. With the triumph of realism, satire—particularly burlesque satire and not the formal satire of the Augustan school—came into full play. *Beppo* is completely steeped in the atmosphere of Italy ; its mood is that of the Venetian Carnival and, therefore, it is the most alien poem in English literature. It resembles the Italian *novella* of the early Renascence in its portrayal of the social licence of Italian burgess life, while in its truth to reality and gaiety it rivals the *Decameron*.

It was written not in heroic couplet but in *ottava rima*.

It is a curtain-raiser to his greatest poem, *Don Juan* the spirit of which it almost foreshadows.

The Vision of Judgement : In 1822 Byron came out with another vigorous satire, *The Vision of Judgement*. Here Byron's verse breathes a genuine hatred of cant in every department of life. In fact, it is a parody of Southey's poem of the same name appeared in 1821 and in its Preface he had attacked the works of Byron for "monstrous combinations of horrors and mockery, lewdness and impiety." Byron replied with a travesty of Southey's poem in which he held the poet-laureate to derision. Resentment for personal insult ; scorn for bad poetry (to which Southey descended) were mixed up with indignation at the poet-laureate's flattery of the king whose private virtues Byron considered merely a cloak for his incompetence as a king. The misdeeds and misdoings of Southey's ideal king are exposed. The euology of George III by the poet-laureate rouses Byron's anger for the king. He (king) is shown so base and low that he cannot be allowed to enter Heaven. Even Satan refuses to admit him to Hell. Satan says :

Of him I have kings, enough below (earth).

At the end, the king is represented as a thief who quietly slips into Heaven unnoticed by any one.

This satire of Byron is most witty and light-hearted. The flippancy of its tone can be well recognized by us. It is full of ridicule and laughter. Byron's slapdash manner and carelessness are clearly perceptible in this satire. The difference between Pope's presentation of personalities for ridicule in *Dunciad* and Byron's presentation of personalities in *The Vision of Judgement* is well marked out. Whereas Pope's portraits are highly finished, because of the labour spent on them, Byron's portraits are clumsily drawn and lack artistic finish. His satire became loose and here we realize the truth of Elton's remark about Byron's satire : "His loose tongue is his worst enemy, for like Rousseau he would sacrifice anybody and anything".

Nowhere else as in this poem, Byron's humour, commonsense, inventive faculty and imagination are so harmoniously blended. We miss only the pathos and sym-

pathy with mature outlook which can be found in his previous compositions. The octave stanza is here used with an unrivalled mastery. The metre obeys his will most faithfully, and satire also becomes very quick and effective. In *Beppo*, the satire is diffused in playful irony but in *The Vision of Judgement*, it is direct and personal.

Don Juan : Byron's last epic satire is *Don Juan*. In this work Byron's genius is characteristically revealed. Its panoramic survey of human society in all the lands of Europe, with the foibles and weaknesses of social institutions and political personalities is truly staggering in its satirical wit. In fact *Don Juan* is a picture of the governing class of Europe by a member of that class itself. The foe was worthy of the steel. Byron himself was as big as those he assailed. He was the most forceful and interesting personality left on the stage of Europe quitted by Napoleon. *Don Juan* is, in the words of Oliver Elton, "the freest, richest, and greatest" of Byron's works. "His eyes glance with the mischief of the satirist". The mocking spirit prevails through out the poem, laughing at himself or his readers. Human nature as revealed in men's bungling with government and war is the principal object of satire :

> 'Let there be light' said God 'and there was light!'
> 'Let there be blood' says man and there is sea !

"In *Don Juan*", wrote Byron, "I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose accomplishments cover and cloak their vices, and paint the natural effects." In Canto X, Juan is brought to England. He is then whirled through the London aristocratic society, which the poet "knew so well and had come to esteem so little." Commenting on the scope and design of *Don Juan*, Bowra writes, "It is the record of a remarkable personality, a poet and a man of action, a dreamer and a wit, a great lover and a great hater, a man with many aims of the 18th century and yet wholly of the 19th, a Whig noble and a revolutionary democrat." The poet himself speaks about the scheme of this epic satire as follows :

> My poem is epic and is meant to be
> Divided in twelve books, each book containing
> With love and war, a heavy gate at sea.

The hero of this epic satire is *Don Juan*, a Spanish adventurer, and his biography is the thread on which Byron hungs descriptions, episodes, and satirical digressions. The poem reflects every mood of Byron's complex and contradictory nature. Here Byron comes before us as the great romanticist and the great realist, the voluptuary and the cynic, the impassioned lover of liberty and the implacable foe of hypocrisy. In this piece of work Byron offers his reflections almost on all aspects of life. A Coquette is exposed and attacked in the following lines :

> Such is your cold Coquette, who can't say, 'No'—
> And won't say 'yes', and keeps you on and off ring
> On a lee-shore, till it begins to blow—
> Then sees your heart wrecked, with an inward scoffing.

Love is satirised as :

> The very god of evil
> For after all we cannot call the devil.

Similarly so many other examples can be cited. In short, *Don Juan* is an epic satire in which Byron satirises individuals, social institutions and modern society in general.

In defence of the charge of immorality against Don Juan: "In speaking of the significance of Byron's satire in *Don Juan*, it is impossible to ignore the charge most frequently preferred against the poem—that it is immoral in tendency. The opinion of Karl Elze, with regard to this represents a not uncommon view. He asserts that 'sensual pleasure' is 'the only thing which escapes the lash of his (Byron's) ridicule'......Hugh Walker's view coincides, in this respect, with Elze's. 'Vice', he says, 'is not explained away or excused by pronouncing the word satire......There is much in *Don Juan* which it would be sublime simplicity to believe to be there for the purpose of reformation.' Byron does seem to revel in the sensual pleasure which he also glamorously describes. But the uudeniable sensuality of certain portions of the poem is definitely subordinate to the positive satire significance of the poem as a whole. It is impossible to adduce evidence in support of the charge that the poem attempts to justify debauchery and

defend vice. Byron attacks not virtue but false virtue. He himself denied any conscious attempt to degrade morals. To the Countess of Blessington Byron said :

> " I was willing to plead guilty of having sometimes represented vice under alluring forms but it was so generally in the world, therefore, it was necessary to paint it so. But that I never represented virtue under the sombre and disgusting shapes of dullness, severity, and *ennui*, and that I always took care to represent the votaries of vice an unhappy themselves, and entailing unhappiness on those that loved them ; so that *my moral* was unexceptionalable."

"This statement is borne out by *Don Juan*. What encouragement of vice can be discovered in Julia's lifelong misery and Haidee's horrible death? If the man comes off scatheless, that is the *world's* morality and not Byron's. Juan, his hero, is not a selfish debaucher but an impressible, generous, affectionate youth, 'more sinned against than sinning,' who shows himself an admirer of innocence as much as of beauty. This is shown by his rescue of the little Turkish girl, his devotion to her, and his zeal for her welfare. It is also shown by his preference for the sweet, gentle and virtuous Aurora Ruby, who shown like a 'star' among the feminine celebrities at Lady Adeline's house party. Furthermore, Byron represents Haidee as an example of simple, naive, natural love and Don Juan is true to her memory when assailed by the Sultan's favourite. Likewise, Byron's statement is borne out by his consistent ridicule of conventional love, on the one hand, and his idyllic pictures of true love, on the other. When Byron writes seriously of woman he is at his best. As one critic has rightly said, 'Indeed, the mere mention of true love between man and woman is generally enough to harmonize his verse and raise it toward sublimity.'

One may say, then, that in implicatlon and essential effect Byron's social satire in *Don Juan* is constructive. Byron does concern himself with the great problems of equality and oppression—and fundamental import of his satire is positive. *Don Juan* is a true illustration of

Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life, and as such it is neither cynical nor shallow, as has often been averred. *Don Juan*, as an epic-satire of all insincerity and all that obstruct human feedom, represents, truly, the flowering of Byron's satirical genius."

In Defence of Byonic Cynicism and Misanthropy : Similarly charge of cynicism has been refuted by Trueblood. He says that "Byron cannot be called cynical because he exposes sincerely the weaknesses of many human institutions. He attacks not ideals but false idealism, false sentiment, false loyalty, false morality, false patriotism and false freedom. With keen insight and utter fearlessness he analyses, and exposes the contrasts and contradictions in human life and relentlessly tears down insincerity. "Again the charge of misanthropy cannot stand against Byron. 'His sense of the nothingness of life,' his conviction that 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' is expressed sardonically, wryly, sometimes theatrically, but it is expressed with a pity for, rather than a detestation of, his fellow men."

To put the same matter in the words of Trueblood would be worthwhile, who convinsingly observes :

"Certainly Byron's vigorous and unequivocal denunciation of hypocrisy and insincerity, individual unsoundness or flagrant abuses in social institutions, and of the worst features of modern civilization cannot be regarded as other than constructive in implication and effect. If Byron's mature satire is occasionally cynical, it concerns shameless human nature and human institutions. The gross and inhuman oppression of tyranny, insatiable avarice, irrationality, and savagery of war, the persistence, poverty, and polar inequalities of modern society—all these were evils so prevalent and so flagrant as readily to provoke cynicism. But certainly it is not reasonable to brand it as 'cynical'—the satire which exposes and vigorously decries the evils of society. Byron's half-jocular claim to be regarded as a moral teacher is not to be dismissed at its face value. Byron fearlessly and uncompromisingly attacked the social evils of his day. The primary objects of his satire were insincerity and oppression. Stated posi-

tively, the major implications of his satire are sincerity and freedom. Assuredly the import of such satire is constructive.

"The charge of cynicism is owing, at least in part, to Byron's habitual juxtaposition of the petty and the heroic, the base and the virtuous......Byron's sudden plunges from the sublime to the ridiculous and his astonishing juxtaposition of virtue and vice were deplored as evidence of a cynical want of a faith in the reality of virtue. The same criticism has been expressed by a modern critic, Hugh Walker. It is true, he says, that no man is a hero to his valet, because the valet sees his pettiness. But so much the worse for the valet. And, Walker continues, 'so much the worse for the satirist if he imagines that the admixture of pettiness makes the heroism unreal.'

"But this criticism is not applicable to Byron. For Byron the admixture of the vicious does *not* make virtue unreal. Byron's representation of the startling proximity in human nature of virtues and vices was clearly intended not to disprove the reality of virtue but rather to emphasize Byron's profound conviction of the insensible but inevitable decline of virtue through overconfidence in its strength. Byron attacks not virtue but false virtue. The often reiterated accusation of the contemporary reviews that Byron's purpose in *Don Juan* was to bring contempt upon, to undermine by ridicule, all that ennobles or delights mankind; it is impossible to support it except by the violent wrestling of certain passages, from their context. Byron attacks not ideals but false idealism, false sentiment, false loyalty, false morality, false patriotism, and false freedom. With keen insight and utter fearlessness he analyses and exposes the contrasts and contradictions in human life and relentlessly tears down insincerity, pretence, and sham. Well might he exclaim, 'Oh, for a *forty-parson power* to chant thy praise, Hypocrisy'."

"The charge of misanthropy is owing Largely, to Byron's forthright and plainspeaking. He did not mince words. To him war meant plunder of the burdened tax-payers at home no less than of the enemy. To him war was at best a 'brain-spattering windpipe-slitting engaged in

by 'those butchers in large business, your mercenary soldiery,' at the beck and call of avaricious despots, burning with the lust of economic conquest. He saw, too, and did not hesitate to denounce the great financiers as the true war-lords of Europe. He stripped war of its honour and its glory and revealed its stark hideousness. His political views as well were heretical. He had no 'proper' respect for tyrants and despots, and refuses to acknowledge them as the wise, benign, and well-meaning guardians of the public weal. Furthermore, Byron was a zealot in his devotion to liberty, both individual and political. His revolutionary indoctrination was regarded by his contemporaries as incendiary, seditious, and subversive. His works, they asserted, were full of treasonable statements such as:

> For I will teach, if possible,
> The stones to rise against earth's tyrants !

And he even presumed to suggest that 'the future shall be free !' He refused to preserve a discreet silence with regard to the vagaries and imperfection of 'holy matrimony'. He also violated another time-honoured belief—that women have so much the best of the bargain in life. He made bold to say that 'man to man so oft unjust is always so to woman.' And as for his ideas of ambition and success, they were as 'degenerate' as his opinions of fame and glory were 'perverse'. He was utterly devoid of the attitude of veneration for worldly success. And most incomprehensible of all to his contemporaries was his vehement insistence that the age in which he lived was *not* the most urbane, cultured, enlightened, and democratic the world had seen.

"These, then, are the characteristics of Byron's satire —thoroughgoing detestation of all that smacks of hypocrisy and forthright denunciation of the most notorious abuses in modern social institutions—which have been branded nihilism and misanthropy."

Conclusion : To conclude, all these charges of insincerity, immorality, hypocrisy, and misanthropy cannot stand against Byron. He is undoubtedly one of the most virile, forceful, and outspoken satirists in the English language.

CHAPTER V

BYRON AS A REVOLUTIONARY AND FREEDOM-FIGHTER

Background in Brief : When Byron began writing, implicit faith in the principles of Revolution had faded away. Divon says that "the wave of joyous emotion had subsided." The ideals of Revolution had been perverted even in France itself but the defeat of Napoleon had failed to usher in a new era of freedom and equality. It was a period of reaction, a period of dejection, and a loss of faith followed. The political and social shape which Europe acquired under the Holy Alliance shattered all hope of an era of freedom.

With Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron saw the aftermath. From this arises the sense of futility of life and of its pettiness which his verse reveals. He had no moral or spiritual prop to fall back upon. His poetry expresses a sense of infinite possibilities, no longer attainable, of what might have been but never can be. So a world-wide disillusionment colours his poetry frequently.

Byron as a practical Freedom-Fighter : The quality in Byron which appeals to and which he professed among the people, is his noble passion for human liberty, his championship of lost hopes and forsaken causes. The cause of liberty always found in him a strong champion, whether in Portugal, Greece, or Spain. His friendship went further than the mere writing of fiery verses. He laid down his life in Greece, fighting for that alien race. His memory is revered there and there are annual commemorations in his memory ; and most boys of Greece would be able to tell an inquirer far more about Byron than the young men of modern England know. His great sacrifice was a noble end to a life in which much fine material was wasted. He wrote:

> What is left the poet here?
> For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Then, immediately after, he asks in scorn:

> Must we but weep? Our fathers bled.

Towards the close of his brief life of thirty-six years, prematurely old and jaded with the pursuit of worldly pleasures, that was the way he chose to lay down his life.

Byron in his poetry as an active Revolutionary: The revolutionary spirit is present everywhere in Byron's poetry. He has been described as the "passionate apostle of liberty." His verse shows the survival of revolutionary spirit even in defeat. A passionate love of freedom and a savage hatred for convention fills his poetry. As a satirist he was a deadly foe of orthodoxy. In his "delightfully contemptuous treatment of European monarchs," Byron was the living embodiment of the ideals of 1789. He believed that the real fulfilment of the human personality would be possible when the powerful obstacles of thrones and courts were removed. He exposed the truth that the Waterloo brought to Europe, not freedom but a further enslavement and that the Holy Alliance was a triumph of reaction. He considered the Duke of Wellington the "best of cutthroats". Byron's verse sounded the clarion call to the "hereditary bondmen" of Greece to rise against the Turks. To him Lord Elgin was a "modern pict" who plundered what even the Turks had spared. For more than a generation the liberals of Europe were fired by his passionate exhortation to liberty. The Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 nourished themselves on the poetry of Lord Byron. His poetry, thus, represents the active revolutionary spirit in Europe. Says J. Nichol, "There is more of the spirit of French Revolution in *Don Juan* than in all the works of Byron's contemporaries."

Byron, a rebel against all types of conventions : Byron was throughout his life a rebel against the established code of religion and morals. Cain raises the banner of revolt against authority and social order. Like Milton, Byron belonged to the "Devil's party." He was ever at war with the prevailing political sentiments of his country. He was the supreme embodiment of the revolutionary rejection of conventional values, an embodiment of revolutionary cult of individualism and of love of adventure. The poet and the man of action merged in Byron.

Byron was a citizen of the world: Byron's life and poetry was a total repudiation of British insularity. It was in his poetry that the revolutionary ideal of brotherhood of mankind found ample expression. In his hands English poetry became, for the first time, truly European in

its interests. Bryon may truly be called a citizen of the world. The landscapes of Southern Europe and Switzerland, the fast flowing Rhine, the ports of Italian cities and the literature of Italy, and, above all, Greece and her plight inspired Byron's poetry more often than the scenes and sights of his own country. "He not only painted the environment but reflected the passions and aspirations of the European scenes through which he passed. The general truth of his descriptions of the European scenes have been generally acknowledged. Of the futurism of the revolutionary idealist there is little trace in Byron."

Byron, a champion of down-trodden and helpless people: Byron had been from his childhood days a great fighter and he stood vigorously against all forms of tyrannies and oppressions. "From childhood he had been a fighter", says Lafcadio Hearn, "and he was not in the least afraid to fight society. He attacked all the conventions, all hypocrisy, all the moral commonplace of English Society in his poetry. He made heroic crime appear more attractive than cowardly virtue, and even boldly ridiculed the religious beliefs that accused or sheltered social falsehood." Byron was a great advocate of the outcast and down-trodden people, and always stood for the defence of liberty and freedom. In whatever shape and in whatever place he found oppression and tyranny, he considered it his religious duty to strike boldly at them with all the vigour of a grand rebel. This love for freedom was not a theoretical principle with him, but a practical beacon of life. He cried against the power of tyranny in the following words:

> What ! shall revolting thraldom again be
> The patched-up idol of enlightened days?

Byron's conception of Liberty : He stood for personal liberty and the liberty of nations. His views were determined by a powerful and positive belief in the work of individual man. He resembled Blake in his condemnation of senseless cruelty and hypocrisy which it breeded for its support. He was the upholder of the natural man aud thought that his bodily pleasures were worthy of protection. "His conception of liberty," as Bowra observes, "was more instructive than intellectual. If he sometimes followed mere

whims and impulses, if some of his ambitions were no more than affectations, he was not without guiding principle, and his death at Missolonghi shows that he was not an actor but soldier, a man of affairs, and a master of men". This love of liberty is well-marked in Byron's works. He wrote the *Prisoner of Chillon* in defence of liberty, and the hero Bonnivard is a votary of liberty like Byron himself. The whole oppressed Europe looked to him for salvation and he became the trumpet voice of freedom. With Byron, liberty became the ruling passion, and he considered it his birthright to fight against all tyranny:

> For I will rack, if possible, the stars,
> To rise against earth's tyrants'.

Byron and Shelley compared as Poets of Liberty : In this connection it is tempting to compare Shelley and Byron. Shelley thought of the future and was inspired by an ideal future. Byron attacked tyrants wherever they existed and pleaded the cause of oppressed humanity. He could not believe that men would for long tolerate the senseless restictions to which they were subjected. He wished to stir them to revolt to make them to rid of their monarchs, and made the world free for free persons. Byron accused his own countrymen of arraying their strength on the side of tyranny.

Byron remained truer to the Principles of the Revolution than anyone else : Byron remained more than other romantics true follower of the principles of the Revolution. Much more than Wordsworth and Coleridge, who after their first enthusiasm for the Revolution surrendered to caution and scepticism, even more than Keats, whose love of liberty was hardly developed to its full range, Byron wished to be free and wished that other men must be free too."

Byron was equally revolutionary in his attitude towards the evils and vices of his age. He was a social revolutionary and ruthlessly exposed and attacked, as in *Don Juan*, the philistinism of the upper English class, the aristocracy and the monarchy. He exposed the hypocrisy, the senseless cruelty, the snobbery, the fraud, the cant and the indolence of his class in society.

CHAPTER VI

BYRONIC HERO OR BYRONISM

Background of Byronic hero: First of all, let us take into consideration the background from which came the Byronic hero. Mr. W. H. Huden has analysed it. He says : "Byron spent his early years in comparative poverty with a mother who alternately hit him and covered him with kisses, and a Calvinist nurse who spoke to him of Hell-fire and predestined damnation......Unhappiness sharpens a child's wits and he soon realized that his parents were violent and odd people, that his ancestors were violent and odd too, and that his deformity made him different from other children. Further, as usually happens when the parents are separated, he idealized the absent one, the father. Out of this background came the Byronic hero; father made him passionate, nanny made him doomed, ancestors and the little lame foot made him aristocratic yet the bitter enemy of society."

Common characteristics of Byronic hero: There are certain characteristics which are commonly to be found in all heroes of Byron—Childe Harold, Lara, Manfred, Bonnivard, Mazeppa. The heroes of Byron share certain common qualities, and out of these has emerged the general Byronic hero, covering the essential traits and qualities of all the heroes of Byron. In them are represented the essential qualities and characteristics that were found in the characters of the poet himself. They are essentially projections of Byron's own personality, his likings and dislikings, his hatreds and antipathies. The heroes of Byron share his enthusiasm and hatred, his opposition to tyranny and oppression, his cynicism and melancholy, and his disregard for the values of life. "He, (Byron) was himself in the beginning, the middle and the end of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred and a crowd of other characters were universally considered

merely as loose incognitos of Byron and there is reason to believe that he meant them to be considered so." The wonders of the outer world, the Tagus, with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom, the flowers of Cintra overhanging the shaggy forest of Cork trees and willows, etc. were all accessories, the background to one dark and melancholy figure, the figure of Byron."

Let us note common characteristics o' Byronic hero. "All or almost all his heroes, have minds which seem at variance with their fortunes, and exhibit high and poignant feelings of pain and pleasure: a keen sense of what is noble and honourable, and an equally keen susceptibility of injustice or injury, under the garb of stoicism or contempt of mankind. His heroes are men who have arrived by different roads to the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven. It appears that the heart of his heroes has withered, and their capacity for happiness had gone to melancholy. They are author of scorn, misanthropy and despair." In short, we may say that the Byronic hero is the embodiment of pride, bravery, restlessness, wickedness, melancholy, cynicism, freedom, opposition to oppression and restraint. His heroes are sadists to a certain degree—they take pleasure in inflicting pain upon others. They are proud, moody, cynical, with defiance to their brows and misery in their hearts. Carsair is proud, capricious, scornful, revengeful to the point of cruelty, prey to remorse and magnanimous enough to submit to the most barbarous tortures rather than kill a sleeping enemy. Cain is a murderer, and Sardanaplaus is proud, brave and voluptuous, Bonnivard and Mazeppa are, like Byron, lovers of freedom and critics of oppression. The final estimate of Byronic hero is that he is the projection of Byron himself. The first appearance of Byronic hero came in *Childe Harold* and the last appearance of the same hero is *Don Juan.*

Referring to the characteristics of the Byronic hero and explaining the reason which impelled Byron to paint such a character over and over again, Sir Walter Scott remarked: "It is another remarkable property of the poetry of Lord Byron, that although his manner is frequently varied, although he appears to have assumed for an occasion the characteristic stanza and style of several contemporaries yet not only is his poetry marked in every instance by the strongest cast of originality but in some leading particulars, and especially in the character of his heroes, each story so closely resembled the other, that, managed by a writer of less power, the effect would have been an unpleasing monotony. *All, or almost all, his heroes, have minds which seem at variance with their fortunes, and exhibit high and poignant feelings of pain and pleasure ; a keen sense of what is noble and honourable, and an equally keen susceptibility of injustice or injury, under the garb of stoicism or contempt of mankind.* The strength of early passion, and the glow of youthful feeling, are uniformly painted as chilled or subdued by a train of early imprudences or of darker guilt, and the sense of enjoyment tarnished by too intimate and experienced an acquaintance with the vanity of human wishes. These general attributes mark the stern features of all Lord Byron's heroes, from those which are shaded by the scalloped hat of the illustrious Pilgrim, to those which lurk under the turban of Alp, the Renegade.

"To what, then, are we to ascribe the singular peculiarity which induced an author of such talent, and so well skilled in tracing the darker impressions which guilt and remorse leave on the human character, so frequently to affix features peculiar to himself to the robbers and corsairs which he sketched with a pencil as forcible as that of Salvator? —More than one answer may be returned to this question ; nor do we pretend to say which is best warranted by the facts. The practice may arise from a temperament which radical and *constitutional melancholy has, as in the case of Hamlet*, predisposed to identify its *owner* with scenes of that deep and amazing interest which arises from the stings of conscience contending with the stubborn energy of pride, and delighting to be placed in supposed situations of guilt and

danger, as some men love instinctively to tread the giddy edge of a precipice, or, holding by some frail twig, to stoop forward over the abyss into which the dark torrent discharges itself. Or it may be that these disguises were assumed capriciously as a man might choose the cloak, poniard, and dark lantern of a bravo, for his disguise at a masquerade. Or feeling his own powers in painting the sombre and the horrible, Lord Byron assumed in his fervour the very semblance of the characters he describes, like an actor who presents on the stage at once his own person and the tragic character with which for the time he is invested. Nor is it altogether incompatible with his character to believe that, in contempt of the criticisms which on this account had attended Childe Harold, he was determined to the public how little he was affected by them, and how effectually it was in his power to compel attention and respect, even when imparting a portion of his own likeness and his own peculiarities to pirates and outlaws.

"But although we do not pretend to ascertain the motive on which Lord Byron acted in bringing the peculiarities of his own sentiments and feeling so frequently before his readers, it is with no little admiration that we regard these extraordinary powers, which, amidst this seeming uniformity, could continue to rivet the public attention, and secure general and continued applause. The versatility of authors who have been able to draw and support characters as different from each other as from their own, has given to their productions the inexpressible charm of variety, and has often secured them against that neglect which in general attends what is technically called mannerism. But it was reserved to Lord Byron to present the same character on the public stage again and again, varied only by the exertions of that powerful genius, which searching the springs of passion and of feeling in their innermost recesses, knew how to combine their operations, so that the interest was eternally varying, and never abated, although the most important personage of the drama retained the same lineaments."

How much of his morbid feelings sprang from an original disease of the mind, how much from real misfortune

how much from the nervousness of dissipation, how much was fanciful, how much was merely affected, it is impossible for us, and would probably have been impossible for the most intimate friends of Lord Byron to decide. Whether there ever existed, or can ever exist, a person answering to the description which he gave of himself, may be doubted ; but that he was not such a person is beyond all doubt. It is ridiculous to imagine that a man whose mind was really imbued with scorn of his fellow-creatures would have published three or four books every year in order to tell them so ; or that a man who could say with truth that he neither sought sympathy nor needed it would have admitted all Europe to hear his farewell to his wife, and his blessings on his child. In the second canto of *Childe Harold*, he tells us that he is insensible to fame and obloquy :

> 'Ill may such contest now the spirit move,
> Which heeds nor keen reproof nor partial praise.'

Yet we know on the best evidence that a day or two before he published these lines, he was greatly, indeed childishly, elated by the compliments paid to his maiden speech in the House of Lords.

"We are far, however, from thinking that his sadness was altogether feigned. He was naturally a man of great sensibility ; he had been ill-educated ; his feelings had been early exposed to sharp trials, he had been crossed in his boyish love ; he had been mortified by the failure of his first literary efforts ; he was straitened in pecuniary circumstances ; he was unfortunate in his domestic relations ; the public treated him with cruel injustice ; his health and spirits suffered from his dissipated habits of life ; he was, on the whole, an unhappy man. He early discovered that, by parading his unhappiness before the multitude, he produced an immense sensation. The world gave him every encouragement to talk about his mental sufferings. The interest which his first confessions excited, induced him to affect much that he did not feel ; and the affection probably reacted on his feelings. How far the character in which he exhibited himself was genuine, and how far theatrical, it would probably have puzzled himself to say."

CHAPTER VII

BYRON'S HATRED OF INSINCERITY AND CONFESSIONAL ELEMENTS IN HIS POETRY

Hatred of Sincerity :Byron had a supreme contempt for all false pretences and affectations of merit, for humbug and hypocrisy in all forms. Hypocrisy is a common vice in modern society, and even Macaulay has referred to the smug and untrue fits of morality that affected Englishmen at various times. He says of the Anglo-Saxon moods of morality :

> "We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its *periodic fits of morality*. In general, elopements, divorces and family quarrels pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. *But once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous*......Accordingly the unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with laxity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders and hissed by the lower......We reflect very complacently on our severity and compare with great pride our superior virtue with Parisian laxity. At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken. And *our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.*"

Against this peculiar British vice, the vice of the Anglo-Saxon people, Byron never ceased to shoot the barbed shafts of his satire. This was one reason for the bitter hostility with which the poet was pursued through all his life by one section of the English public. They looked on him as the great spirit of evil, the Tempter of Youth, the founder of the Satanic School, as Southey called him in a fit of virtuous

satire. Whatever the effect may have been on Byron's social repute at the time, it is impossible to deny that his whole-hearted contempt for hypocrisy, his desire to call a spade a spade rather than to use words to conceal, rather than express the truth, all this has given a colour of sincerity and an impression of strength to his verses. It is for this outspoken boldness and defiance of what is small and false that he is still read and loved by some. True it is that contempt for narrow minds and for the smug manners of the Pharisees of his day led him at times to be so outspoken that he over-stepped the limits of decent speech, and came even into coarseness. Admitting this fact, the merit of his outspoken truth is still great.

Byron the realist : Allied to this burning hatred of his day, another point, which he had in common with Burns, was the fact that he possessed strong gifts of satirist expression. Satire of literary quality is rare, and Byron was possibly the most accomplished English satirist after Pope. That is not all to be claimed for his powers were in some respects wider and of a greater variety than those of the more "correct" Pope. His satire was less due to personal motives, and altogether on a higher plane than that of Pope. Byron has nothing quite so brilliant, indeed, as certain selected passages from Pope, because they were two men of widely differing types. Byron had none of that natural malignity of nature, that "waspishness" of love of stinging for the sake of stinging, which was undoubtedly the most characteristic feature of little Pope, and which gave point and pungency to his satires and lampoons. Byron had reason to be angry with the Edinburgh reviewers for their slashing and not altogether fair review of his earliest poetic production. But even in the bitterest and most biting passage of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, there is little of hard, personal acrimony. There is much of youthful audacity and irreverence, some coarse and perhaps needless offensiveness, especially in the remarks on the Lake School, but the whole is redeemed by a vein of rollicking good humour and mirth. The author evidently enjoyed heartily what he wrote, and his victims also, especially the more manly and genial among them like Scott, never bore any grudge against him in later years for the escapade of his youth.

Perhaps Southey was the man against whom Byron was most severe, not altogether without cause ; and he never missed an opportunity of covering 'Bob Southey, poet, poet-laureate' with ridicule. Though there is much contempt in these verses, there is little of personal animus, and his greatest cause of anger against the ex-jacobin poet-laureate was his apostasy from his former political principles. *Renegade* and *turncoat* are the epithets which he applied most often against Southey, and no one can deny that facts justified the use of these epithets.

It is in *The Vision of Judgement* that Byron's satiric humour has freest play ; and this poem, a parody upon Southey's feeble and pompous poem of the same name, may be regarded as the greatest parody in English Literature. Satire forms also the ground-work of Byron's longest and perhaps greatest poem, *Don Juan* ; but with satire there is much passion, eloquence and pathos, the whole making up an altogether great and wonderful miscellany.

Confessional Elements in Byron's Poetry : "Byron concentrates in himself and reflects in all his writings, the disappointed aspirations, the failure, the sorrow of i time. Others had felt it before. Shakespeare knew it, and gave it utterance in the soliloquies of *Hamlet*. Rousseau had expressed it in his *Confessions*. But in Byron it finds its fullest expression. His own time recognized in him its own genius made him vocal. This world's weary disillusionment is the motive that runs through that marvellous and varied stream of poetry poured forth by Byron in the year that follows his exile—— the later books of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *The Dream*, *The Prophecy of Dante*, *Manfred*, and *Don Juan*."

The autobiographical or the personal expression of life is present in many of the poems of Byron. He gives expression to his likings and dislikings, his hatred of slavery and his opposition to tyranny, his love of women and his love of beauty of nature in several of his poems. In short he himself becomes hero of his poems. In *Childe Harold*, it is Byron himself, who is present throughout in the personality of the Childe. Referring to this Hough remarks :

"Childe Harold is the first appearance of the Byronic hero. Childe Harold is simply the first of many fancy portraits of himself".

Byron represents himself again and again, and his poetry is confessional in tone. "Scenes and events and persons are all topics in a great declamation", says Prof. Grierson, "The central theme of wnich is Byron himself, his wrongs, his sorrows and sombre reflections on life". "He was himself the beginning, the middle and the end, of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Childe Harold, Lara, Manfred and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered mere loose incognitos of Byron himself; and there is every reason to believe that he meant them to be so considered." Self-conscious vainty produced in him an anti-social shyness and inclined him to solitary meditation, consciousness of possession of high powers made him passionately desirous of active fame. This conflict in his mind between these two contrary forces resulted in the form of morbid self-expression. References to Byron's life, habits, etc. are unmistakably present in his works. (*For a detailed study of the autobiographical elements in the poetry of Byron see the preceeding chapter*).

Conclusion : The next question that comes before us is whether what Byron expresses of himself is a sincere expression or a mere hypocritical pose. Many critics have condemned his lyrics and personal poems because of their hypocritrial tone. The charge of insincerity is brought against him. But Cazamian refutes the charge by asserting that it would be incorrect to say that 'Byron's existence was one continual pose'. Swinburne considered Byron sincere. He writes, "We have to recognize Byron's excellence of sincerity and strength. Without these no poet can live ; but few have ever had so much of them as Byron. His sincerity indeed is difficult to discover and define ; but it does in effect lie at the root of all his good works deformed by pretension and defaced by assumption, marked by folly and veiled by affection ; but perceptible after all and priceless". Besides, a man who has put himself so much in his works and is ever ready to discuss his inner feelings before the world can hardly be insincere. It is rather Byron's

fundamental sincerity that accounts for his greatness. In this connection we close this chapter with the well judged opinion of Symons who says, "He is fundamentally sincere which is the root of greatness. He has a firm hold on himself and on the world ; he speaks to humanity in its own voice heightened to a pitch which carries across Europe. No poet had ever seemed to speak to men so directly, and it was through this directness on his vision of the world, and of his speech about it, that he became a poet, that he made a new thing of poetry".

CHAPTER VIII

THE RHETORICAL AND MELANCHOLY ELEMENTS IN BYRON'S POETRY

The Rhetorical Elements in Byron's Poetry : There is in much of his work a tendency to become rhetorical and declamatory. That declamatory nature explains why several of Byron's shorter pieces have been favourites for the purpose of recitation. They are formal and high-sounding speeches. It requires artistic taste to feel the distinction between sincere poetry and that which is declamatory. Consider the well known lines on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, in Canto III of *Childe Harold* :

> "There was a sound of revelry by night".

The verse moves slowly and with dignity, till the dramatic climax is reached :

> "Nearer, clearer, deadlier than before,
> Arm, Arm, it is cannon's opening roar''.

This sounds majestic but it is the grandeur of platform eloquence and not the true ring of poetic feeling. It is fine, rhetoric, excellent for recitation, but with none of the feelings of the poet. The colour is laid on too thickly, the voice is too loud, there is no restraint on moderation, it is all too emphatic and striking. It is never likely to be forgotten, and, although declamation, is very fine declamation. It is, however, melodramatic rather than dramatic. The true poetic feeling is in Keats when he says:

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever''

or Wordsworth exclaims :

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star
> Hath had elsewhere its seiting,
> And cometh from afar".

The colours are more delicate, and the sound more subtle. It is a difference similar to that between the lid of a chocolate box and the quiet colour of the fine landscape painter. Some may prefer the chocolate-box. It is all a matter of taste. Much of Byron is certainly eloquent and high-sounding, but lacking in that delicate restraint and reserve which goes with the very highest. It is never low enough to be bombastic, never, noisy enough to be soap-box oratory, but often a little lower and a little more noisy than we could have wished.

We can imagine a speaker quoting to an enraptured audience:

> The mountain looks on Marathon,
> And Marathon looks on the sea ;
> And musing there an hour alone,
> I dreamed that Greece migth still be free.

and this would be appreciated because of its obvious meaning and eloquent boldness of expsession. High eloquence however, is not necesarily high poetry, and the true essence of poetry is a thing which steals over the inner senses, rather than the physical ear.

A more serious defect is the hollow sentimentalism which at times is felt to be a blemish. Sentimentalism is a false and "stagey" emotions, an insincere and untrue form of feeling. It is often but a mood of theoretical posing, while emotion is sincere if it is anything at all. Sentimentalism is a deliberately indueed emotion, not because it is truly felt, but rather for the sake of experiencing it and proclaiming it. The main note is lack of sincerity. This untrue sentimentalism—brought bim is Carlyle's name for it — will be found most in the shorter tales of Byron, far less frequently in the greater works——very rarely in *Childe Harold* and almost never in *Don Juan*.

Though Byron has written a few admirable lyrics, his genius was more oratorical rather than lyrical. Referring to the lyrics of Byron Mooreman has remarked in *Cambridge History of English Literatute* Volume XI : "In no province of poetry is Byron's command of success so uncertain as in that

of the lyric. He has left us a few songs which rank high even in an age which was transcendentally great in lyric power and melody. But, only too often, the beauty with which one of his lyrics opens is not sustained, the passion grows turbid and the thought passes from pure vision to turgid commonplace. Among the most impassioned of his love lyrics is that entitled *When We Two Parted*; it was written in 1808 and may have been inspired by the poet's hopeless passion for Mary Chaworth. To the same tragic episode in his career, though written later than the song, we owe *The Dream* (1816), in which passion and imagination combine to produce one of the most moving poems that Byron ever wrote. Intensely lyrical in spirit, the poem is, nevertheless, written in blank verse, which Byron here manipulates with a dexterity that he seems to have utterly lost in the loosely-knit structure of his dramatic blank verse. The same volume which contained *The Dream*, contained, also, another visionary poem in blank verse, *Darkness*. To those who assert that Byron, in his serious poetry, is little more than a *poseur* and a rhetorician, this poem should be a day-dream of clinging horrors ; but, amid all its tumultuous visions of a world in which cosmos is reduced to chaos, we are made to feel the naked sincerity of the poet's soul."

Referring to the oratorical element in Byron's poetry, Symons has observed : "Byron's theory of poetry and his practice were two very different things, both faulty and telling against one another. His theory was that the finest English poetry is to be found in Pope : 'What I firmly believe in as the Christianity of English poetry, is the poetry of Pope.' Admitting frankly that he had not followed so correct a master with any sort of attention, he apologised on the ground that 'it is easier to perceive the wrong than to pursue the right'. 'But I have lived in far countries abroad,' he tells us, 'or in the agitating world at home, which was not favourable to study or reflection, so that almost all I have written has been mere passion —passion, it is true, of different kinds, but all is passion.' And he adds : 'But then I did other things besides write.'

" 'We are all wrong, except Rogers, Crabbe, and Campbell', he laments, 'going on his own way, all the same

for good and evil.' And his own way, until he accustomed himself frankly to 'wandering with pedestrian Muses,' as he tells us in *Don Juan*, and thus adding to the ground a splendour which he could not capture from the skies, was a very uneven way with many turnings 'My qualities' he tells us of his school-days at Harrow, 'were much more oratorical than poetical, and Dr. Drury, my grand patron, had a great notion that I should turn out an orator, from my fluency, my turbulence, my voice, my copiousness of declamation, and my action.' The criticism justified itself ; Byron's qualities in verse are indeed much more oratorical than poetical'; and, in all this earlier work theory accentuated this natural tendency so fatally that we have to scrape off a great deal of false glitter if we are to find the good metal which is often enough to be found, even in the metrical romances, with their pseudo-passion, doing injustice to a really passionate nature, their impossible heroes not without certain touches of just self-portraiture, their impossible heroines, betraying after all a certain first-hand acquaintance with the 'dreadful heart of women.' In narrative verse Byron finally made for himself a form of his own which exactly suited him but in lyrical verse he never learnt to do much that he could not already do in the 'Hours of Idleness.' His 'last lines' are firmer in measure, graver in substance, but they are written on exactly the same principle as the 'Well ! thou art happy' of 1808. There is the same strange simplicity of feeling in which a really moved directness comes through the traditional rhetoric of the form. Every stanza says something and it says exactly what he means it to say without any of the exquisite evasions of a more purely poetic style ; without, too, any of the qualifying interruptions of a more subtle temperament. Byron's mind was without subtlety ; whatever he felt, he felt without reservations or the least thinking about feeling : hence his immediate hold upon the average man or woman who does not need to come to his verse as the verse of most other poets must be approached with a mind already prepared for that communication. There is force, clearness, but no atmosphere ; everything is seen detached a little bare, very distinct in strong light without shadows."

Melancholy Elements : Byron shared with some romantic poets the melancholy temperament. In fact romantic melancholy was his most distinctive characteristic. Referring to this, Symons has observed in his book *Romantic Movement in English Poetry* : "What came to give him his measure of distinction, his dark background, whatever he has of depth, was, characteristcally, a personal accident, as it might seem, a fiery melancholy, for which he held the nature of things, no less than his own nature, responsible. Conscience, some inexplicable self-torture, a loomy belief that the sun

'shall not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature';

these, with almost an admitted pride in their potency, and a strenuous and reiterated pride in dominating them, were given to Byron lest the world should have satisfied him, which is failure in life. One of the spirits in 'Manfred' says to the other :

'This is to be mortal,
And seek the things beyond mortality';

and the other answers:-

'Yet see, he mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will,
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.'

"It was good for Byron that he was unhappy, that memories and apprehensions came to rescue him harshly out of the present, in which he might so easily have taken too unthinking a pleasure, the triviality which was one side of his maliness, the scorn of vague speculation, which was in danger of drifting into an indifference towards ideas, the excess of his mental tendency towards action, were all lying in wait for him, and, in the absence of some overshadowing and everpowering idea, would have found him at their mercy. Byron was not a thinker, but he was afraid of hell, and his courage throughout life was the genuine courage of one to whom death was really terrifying. 'The worst of it is that I *do* believe,' he said ; and his belief was that he was predestined to fall endlessly into the power

of evil. It is his own portrait, as he conceived it, that he draws in 'Manfred'—

> This should have been a noble creature : he
> Hath all the energy which should have made
> A goodly frame of glorious elements,
> Had they been wisely mingled ; as it is,
> It is an awful chaos— light and darkness—
> And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts
> Mixed, and contending without and or order,
> All dormant and destructive.

What other, more human memories, regrets, unavailing repentances mingled with this fatalistic sense of condemnation, we cannot tell ; but certainly Byron's half-proud and half-desperate sense of sin was no pose, but almost the deepest part of his inner life:

> 'Our life is a false nature—'tis not in
> The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
> This uneradicable taint of sin,
> This boundless Upas, this all-blasting tree,
> Whose root is Earth' :

such an outcry, in *Childe Harold*, means at least all that it says. If Byron's fixed unhappiness were but the weariness of one to whom pleasure had been too kind, or a mere scowl for effect like the 'unhappy' expression which he assumed when sitting for his bust to Thorwaldsen, then his personlity, the one thing which has profoundly interested the world in him, was but a playing at hide-and-seek with emotion. Not to have been sincere (sincere at root, beneath all the rhetoric) would have been, for Byron, to have lost all hold on our sympathy, all command of our admiration.

"Byron's ennui, what he meant when he called himself 'the earth's tired denizen', was made up of many elements, but it was partly of that most incurable kind which comes from emptiness rather than over-fulness ; the ennui of one to whom thought was not satisfying, without sustenance in itself, but itself a cause of restlessness, like a heady wine drunk in solitude.

"Byron clamoured for all the good things of life, as a

child clamours, passionately, amidst storms of tears, when one of them is denied him. Seeming to others to have got more than his share, he was discontented if he did not get all he wanted ; and no one, in this world, gets quite all when he wants so many things as Byron. It has seemed strange to some that Byron should have been so sensitive to dispraise, so restive under any check. But it was part of his nature ; it was but another manifestation of that 'straining after the unlimited' which Goethe saw to be one of his main characteristics.

"And then Byron suffered, we can hardly doubt, from that too vivid sense of humanity which is like a disease, that obsession to which every face is a challenge and every look an acceptance or a rebuff. How is content in life possible to those condemned to go about like magnets, attracting or repelling every animate thing, and tormented by the restlessness which their mere presence communicates to the air about them ? This magnetic nature is not given to man for his happiness. Condemning him to 'plunge into the crowd,' it leaves him at the crowd's mercy, as he sensitively feels the shock of every disturbance which he causes there. Driving him into solitude for an escape, it will not let him even there escape the thought of what in himself is so much an epitome of humanity, for 'quiet to quick bosoms is a hell.' Nature becomes painfully human to him, and seems a sort of external memory, recorded in symbols. A note in Byron's Swiss Journal, afterwards brought almost word for word into 'Manfred', shows us this effect of nature : 'Passed whole woods of withered pines, all withered ; trunks stripped and barkless, branches lifeless, done by a single winter ; their appearance reminded me of me and my faimly. We find him declaring, with unaccustomed solemnity that 'neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory, around, above, and beneath me.' Byron's thought about the universe, even when it came nearest to abstract thinking, was always conditioned, and for the most part quite frankly, by his personal circumstances."

CHAPTER IX

BYRON AS A POET OF NATURE

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends ;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home ;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam.

Byron compared with the other Romantic poets : These four lines from Byron's poem represent his great love for nature. In fact, nature came to be adored by the Romantic poets of England, and Byron was no exception. His love of Nature was intense and deep, and his attitude towards Nature was a little different from Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. Wordsworth and Shelley spiritualized and intellectualized Nature, and in the words of Compton-Rickelt, "They are not merely poets of Nature, they are prophets of Nature. They are concerned less to depict than explain, less to marvel at her beauty than to exult at its inner significance" Wordsworth finds the healing power in Nature and evolves a theory to explain the mysteries of Nature. With Byron we have nothing of that type. His love of Nature is of its own kind and stands apart from other romantic poets.

"Lacking the intensity of Wordsworth, the subtlety of Coleridge, the receptivity of Keats, the aerial fire of Shelley, Byron possessed a breath and vigour of imagination beyond that of any contemporary. Nowhere is this more agreeably illustrated than in his love of Nature. In this love he is at one with all his own particular ways, there is no meditative musing, little sense of mystery, but a very lively sense of wonder and delight in the energising glories of Nature."

Byron's attitude towards Nature : Byron's attitude towards Nature is that it is free from theory or ulterior intention. In this connection Bowra points out in his *Romantic Imagination*, "While Wordsworth sought vision

or moral interpretation, Byron took Nature as he found it ; and appreciated much that Wordsworth missed. His poetry of Nature is instructive and immediate, free from theory or ulterror intention." Byron went to Nature to seek refuge from human society. He loved solitude and this he could alone find in Nature. Moorman says, "Byron seeks communion with Nature in order to escape from man ; high mountains become 'a feeling' to him when the hum of human cities is a torture." Wordsworth hears in Nature the music of sad humanity ; Byron hears no music of humanity in Nature. For him Nature is a refuge, a place of shelter, where he can hide himself from the weariness, the fever and fret of the world. This is the reason why Byron writes :

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is a rapture on the lovely shore ;
> There is society where none intrudes,
> By the deep sea, and music in its roar.

Byron's attitude towards Nature was not of a countryman but of a townsman. He appreciated the beauty of Nature from the stand-point of a man who was disgusted with the humdrum life of cities.

"Byron does not look to Nature to find in it some spiritual essence that is actually there," says Graham Hough, "he looks to it to echo and include his own passions." It means that Nature is intimately related to Byron's feelings, and he colours Nature according to his mental and physical state. This is the subjective approach of the poet to Nature. He did not find the 'healing balm' that Wordsworth found in nature, but still his feelings well formed the basis of communion with the objects of Nature.

Byron, being no philosopher and moralist, takes delight in giving fine descriptions of Nature. His descriptions are superior to Wordsworth's, though inferior to Tennyson's in the point of accuracy and precision. He describes Nature in broad outlines and fuses his feelings with the objects of her. He does not analyse minutely the objects. The fact is that, "the objects which he sees and his own feelings are fused

together and take shape in imaginative and metaphorical language." (Tozer).

Byron describes both calm and stormy aspects of Nature: Byron sees Nature both in its calm and stormy aspects. Wordsworth was drawn only by the silence that is in the starry sky but Byron presented Nature both in its tranquil and stormy aspects. Both these aspects can be seen in *Childe Harold*. About the calmness of the scene, notice the following two lines :

It is the hush of night, and all between,
Thy margin and the mountain dusk, it yet clean.

The stormy aspect is presented in such lines as :

The sky is changed! and such a change, Oh Night,
And storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
From peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder,
Every mountain hath now found a tongue,
And this is in the night! most glorious night...earth-quake birth.

Byron was able to face the cruel and inhuman aspects of Nature as most of the romantics could not. With Byron there is no shuddering about the presentation of the sinister side of Nature. He does so without contempt and without complaint. In *Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge weaves an alluring magic of a wild moon and dancing stars, but Byron dwells on the sullen and brooding atmosphere without covering it with a romantic halo like Coleridge.

The quiet, peaceful, and ordinary aspects of Nature had little appeal for Byron. He felt a real delight in the grand and awe-inspiring aspects of Nature. The vast spaces of the starry sky, the boundless expanse of the sea, peaceful or stormy, thunder, avalanche and tempest possessed Byron's imagination. They spoke to something in his soul. Was it passion ? Byron does not reflect or brood over them. Neither does he impart any symbolism to them like Coleridge and Shelley. There is simply wonder and delight at their spectacle.

The helplessness of man before Nature was a subject from which the romantics shrank, but Byron saw it, and spoke sincerely about it.

Byron was attracted mostly towards water in Nature like Milton and his descriptions of Rhone, Rhine and the ocean are fine pieces of nature description in romantic poetry.

Byron a cosmopolitan in his description of Nature : Byron's nature does not seek inspiration in the quiet English fields and meadows and the sights and sounds of English landscape. His landscape and nature are more often European. The Rhine, the Snowy crags and peaks of the Alpine range, the sunset in Morea, or the Mediterranean were more dear to him than the fields, forests, or lake of England. In this respect Byron stands alone among the English poets of the nineteenth century. The colours, sights and sounds of England fill Keats's odes ; the nature of Lake districts forms the substance of Wordsworth's poetry; the English flowers, birds and plants appear in Shelley's poems again and again and the country side of Lincolnshire inspired Tennyson. Byron is the least national of the English poets of Nature.

Nature as a background of human action : Byron often treats Nature as a splendid background against which he depicts human activities. In *Don Juan*, Nature is a background to human life. It had no soothing or healing influence on him. He was not contented with her alone. Rather "in the midst of Nature he was devoured by a thirst for action, and social ambition". Instead of Wordsworthian wise passiveness, Byron had a sense of the majesty of her beauty. He expresses this in a language filled with a possionate intensity far beyond Wordworth's reach. Byron could describe her beauties with powerful effects—

> 'Tis midnight ; on the mountains brown
> The cold, round moon shines deeply down;
> Blue roll the waters blue the sky
> Spreads like an ocean hung on high
> Bespangled with those isles of light......

CHAPTER X

BYRON AS AN ARTIST AND HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Follower of Pope and his school : Lord Byron was undoubtedly one of the most powerful and vigorous of the Engllsh Romantic poets. Born in the age of romanticism and composing poems in the style and manner of his contemporaries, he had his sympathies with the Augustans among whom he adored Pope in particular. He was fascinated by his poetry and considered him a prince among the English poets. But unlike his master Pope whose preoccupations were mainly social, Byron was interested more in himself than in the social forces in which he sought to move.

Unlike the other Romantics, Byron was a realist having no interest in Imagination : Unlike the other romantic poets, Byron was not interested in imagination, reflection or aerial flights in the dreamy utopias of poetic creation. He was a realist in poetry and sought to present the pictures of social, economic life as he viewed it in his wide travels. He was a traveller and his *Childe Harold* gives ample proof of his journey through the European countries. *Don Juan* is his other travel book in poetry recounting the adventurous and picaresque adventures of the heroes in Italy, Spain, Turkey, Russia and England. The observations of Byron in all these countries are realistically and trenchantly presented by him in his poetry. He was of the earth and was satisfied in moving about the midst of real life. In *Don Juan* he says :

I mean to show things really as they are
Not as they ought to be : for I avow
That till we see what's what is fact we'er far
From much improvement.

In his poetry Byron was fierce, vigorous and active. He was an actor rather than a dreamy philosopher lost in the

fumes of narcotic vapours. He thundered and volleyed and shook Europe by his utterances.

An Autobiographical Poet : Perhaps to no poet of the nineteenth century can the proverb "Poeta nascitur" be applied with greater justice than to Byron. He was essentially a poet, a poet through and through, so that it may almost be said that he lived and moved and had his being in poetry. No one ever turned the events of his life or the scenes in midst of which his life was spent, more frequently into poetic material than Byron. This explains the fact of his personality appearing so constantly in his works. Indeed, he could not help thrusting his own self into poems least meant to be autobiographical.

A Revolutionary Poet : The secret of Byron's tremendous power was his passionate sympathy with his own times. By accidents of birth and circumstances, he came to be the opponent of the existing order and institutions of society, and his bold, defiant character made him the exponent of the spirit of revolution. He is the greatest modern preacher of "liberty, equality and fraternity."

Love of Nature : If Byron is revolutionary poet like Shelley, he was no less a poet of Nature like Wordsworth or Keats or Tennyson. His poetry was the outcome of the Romantic revival inaugurated in England by Cowper and Burns. Now there are three classes of Nature poets : (1) those who treat Nature simply as the background of the human stories: (2) those in whom Nature produces a sort of ecstasy resulting in a kind of rapturous hymn to her glory, rather than in a vivid picture of her features; and (3) those whose impulse is simply to paint the features of Nature in every detail of their beauty, and who use the human story merely as an instrument for an objective representation of Nature. Shakespeare and Chaucer belong to the first of these classes. Shelley is the illustration of the second group but to this also belongs Byron, who combines a passion for Nature with a love for describing her features in vivid colours. His natural descriptions, however, sadly lack in scientific accuracy ; but their general truth is acknowledged by all who have verified his remarks by personal observa-

tion. But he had a sincere delight in the storms and crags that seemed to respond to his nature. The exclamation :

> O that the desert were my dwelling-place,
> With one fair spirit for my minister !.

is perfectly sincere, as far as it concerns the particular mood which it represents : but his moods themselves were constantly shifting from extreme to extreme, and this has brought down on his poetry (as on his character) the reproach of insincerity.

Want of artistic Merit : As an artist, Byron occupies a very low position among the poets of the nineteenth century. Scarcely one page ever comes to perfection as regards workmanship ; hardly one stanza will bear close analysis which only brings into clearer view the delicate touches of Keats or Tennyson. "His pictures with a big brush were never meant for the microscope". He is habitually rapid and slovenly ; all his poems bear evident traces of their having been written at gush. He himself has told us : "I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger ; if I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle." Blank verse was consequently not in his line at all, for it requires careful workmanship. The little blank verse he has written is always defective. Hence the paradoxical statement made by Prof. Nichol that "no one else who could write so well, could also write so ill." "He had none of the guardian delicacy of taste, or the thirst after completeness, which mark the consummate artist. He is more nearly a dwarf Shakespeare than a giant Pope."

"Of saying a thing," writes Elton, "once for all, in its right and final form and then holding his peace, Byron had from first to last no idea whatever, except in satire...This is Byron's greatest failing as an artist." He loses almost nothing by translation. If, as Byron himself said, "the true poet is he who best executes his work," we can justifiably deny him the title of a poet. W. M. Dixon says : "The poetry of Byron achieves but occasionally that high and rare beauty which consists in perfect truthfulness of substance, united with perfect fitness of expression."

Byron cared little for the perfect mastery of any

medium of poetic expression. Except in *Don Juan* he frequently fails to master the art form he employs, whether in Spenserian stanza or blank verse. The reason was partly carelessness and partly the force of his passion which refused to be claimed to "Art". Moreover, he wrote with too swift a pen to revise and perfect what he had written. Fervour, intensity and passion are there but for form he never cared enough to achieve perfection. The result is frequent slovenliness of diction and occasionally cheap rhetoric. It is because of these reasons that Byron is sometimes charged as an improviser.

Dixon raises a very vital question about Byron as a poet. According to him, "there is scarcely any trace to be found anywhere in Byron of the presence of higher creative imagination." And Dixon is not alone. Hazlitt had also said that Byron "has brought out few new traits of feeling or thought". "Byron lacks vision," says Ernest de Selincant. A creator in the highest sense, "Byron is not," says Herford. The reason according to him is that Byron "lacks supreme imagination". With boundless resources of invention and rhetoric, passion, wit, fancy, he has not the quality which creates out of sensation, or thought, or language, or all together an action, vision, an image, or a phrase which, while penetrated with the poet's individuality, has the air of discovery, not an invention, and no sooner exists than it seems to have always existed."

The grounds of Dixon's criticism of Byron are moral. "The philosophy of Byron," wrote Dixon, "like the philosophy of Shelley, is without enduring or universal application." It is a philosophy of defiance, he maintains, without good reasons for defiance. Furthermore Dixon finds no spiritual significance or moral message in Byron's poetry : "Byron does not encourage us towards higher spiritual attainment."

"There is no positive moral purpose in Byron," Dixon continues. As if that is the function of a poet ! What is the positive moral purpose, one might ask, in Shakespeare or Keats ? Is it possible to create great poetry out of "moral purpose" ? This will bring us to a question which goes straight to the very basis of poetry. Is poetry a handmaiden

of morality ? And as Grierson has told us, Byron's defiance of morality should be seen in the background of a century of lifeless moralising in poetry that had preceded the Romantic Revival. It might be said that Byron's disregard of moral purpose was necessary if English poetry was to liberate itself from the eighteenth-century values.

Descriptive power : But while lacking the power of forming a poetic whole, Byron greatly excelled in the power of describing individual events. A certain critic has said of him : "Byron is nothing without his descriptions." But the remark is not meant as a compliment, but serves only as another evidence of Byron's defective art.

Rhetorical and Melancholy elements in the Poetry of Byron : (See the preceding Chapter)

His vocabulary : His vocabulary was extensive, so that, whatever the subject he may be treating of, he can always command words at once the most apt and expressive. This was no doubt due to his wide reading and his strong memory. But he does not seem to have had any of that pecultiarity for words of Anglo-Saxon origin which we find in the lines of Tennyson ; he seems, on the other hand, to have been especially fond of employing words of foreign extraction, and sometimes of using uncommon or obsolète forms.

Lack of originality : All this belongs to what may be called his *manner* or his form, as distinguished from his *matter* or substance. In this too, Byron does not stand out as pre-eminently great or thoroughly original. His subjects have been traced to their origin in Rousseau, Voltaire, and a number of French and German authors, from whom he freely borrowed materials for his poems. But when he borrowed he did so not by way of outward assumption, but by way of transfusing his materials into the substance of his own imagination, whence they issued forth again in a new form : "he made them his own by recasting the rough ore into bell-metal," and in this respect he resembled Shakespeare and Milton.

Faulty sense of metre : In point of metre too, Byron showed no originality. The god of his idolatry was Pope, whose satiric couplet he tried to imitate. But his imitations

were not confined to Pope alone : he took up any measure that struck him as effective and tried his hand on it. Campbell's example suggested the Spenserian stanza ; Scott and Coleridge suggested the rapid tetrametres of his *Eastern Tales* ; and Frere's *Whistlecraft*, the *ottava rima* of his *Beppo* and *Don Juan.* On Byron's imperfect sense of metre, Mr. Swinburne, the greatest authority on English poetry, comments as follows : –

"One native and incurable defect grew up and strengthened side by side with his noblest qualities—a feeble and faulty sense of metre. No poet of equal or inferior rank ever had so bad an ear. His smoother cadences are often vulgar and facile ; his fresher notes are often incomplete and inharmonious. His verse stumbles and jumbles, stammers and halts, where it most needs for a swift and even pace of musical sound."

Want of Narrative Power : It may be said that Byron had no gift of story-telling. This seems almost incredible in face of the numerous stories that he has told us; but the face seems to be indubitable. Byron has given us many stories : *Lara*, *Parisina*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *Childe Harold*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *The Island*, *The Corsair* and numerous others. It may be asked—"a man who had no genuine instinct for story-telling—why should he flood us with so many tales? The answer is that tale-writing was then in fashion and Byron wanted to swim with the current. Scott had set the fashion with his brilliant stories in verse and Byron followed suit. Only Scott gave us the manners, customs, incidents of those Middle Ages which he loved so well, while Byron introduced the Englishman of his time to the mysterious wonderland of the East. And the effect was overwhelming. For a time it almost seemed as if Byron had outrun Scott in his own special field ; and Scott gave up writing poetry and turned to novels, remarking with the sunny geniality of his nature, that in verse Byron had *bet* him. Posterity has woefully reversed the judgment of contemporaries. Scott's stories are still eagerly read by thousands; while, who ever cares to read the oriental tales of Byron? The reason is obvious. Byron is deficient in that healthy humanity of interest, that genial insight into

character, that zest and relish in the narration of stirring tales of adventure which are characteristic of Scott's genius, and this accounts for the failure of readers to show much interest now in Byron's romances.

Byron Lacked Dramatic Instinct : If Byron was not a great story-teller, it is equally true that he lacked the dramatic gift. He wrote several dramas : *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari* and *Cain*, to mention no more. Some of them, especially the "witch-drama" of *Manfred* contain material that might have been made suitable for dramatic presentation. Several of them contain passages of very fine poetry. As acting dramas, however, they are impossible. They have not the flow and thrill of action which we see in a good dramatist ; they are torpid in action and dull in conception. The moving interplay of emotions, the clash of character, which make a tragic play, are absent. There is nothing that we could term natural dramatic dialogue, but rather a series of soliloquies (as in *Comus*) following on each other with none of the naturalness of human talk. There is no evidence of a deep knowledge of human nature and insight, into character, sympathy with different ranges of thought, ability to embody different passions in individual human beings and set them forth alive, to move and act. Byron had none of these essential gifts of the dramatist. This was largely due to his own nature and personality. He could never get away from his own obstrusive self, and the dramatist must be non-personal. He was haunted by the part he had created for himself, and was morbidly self-conscious. All his characters, therefore, are but reflections of his own self and character, perhaps sometimes magnified and distorted. It is as if he sat in a room surrounded by a number of reflecting mirrors, each of which returned a different version of the central Byron. In his work, dramatic or not, each character is Byron speaking with a different mask or a different shape. Childe Harold, Don Juan, the Corsair, Manfred, even Saradanapalus—all, all are Byron—now moody, wrapt in gloom, eager to fly his own shadow, now mocking, cynical, sensual with a careless daredevil gaiety in his heart, but in all moods alike bitter, cynical, self-weary and world-weary.

Dramatic "Posing." : Another serious defect, closely allied with the former one and perhaps forming the source of it, is the affectation which he could never altogether shake off. This vice of affectation was in the very nature of man and sprang from that acute self-consciousness which obsessed him through life. He could never forget that he was expected to play a prominent part on the stage of life and that the eyes of the whole gallery were fixed upon him. We always find him playing a part ; we almost catch him as if attitudinizing before a mirror. He bagan life as a *poseur*, and he remained a *poseur* through the large part of it. The pose he most affected was that of the sour and cynical misanthrope—one who had tasted all the pleasures and almost all the vices of the world and to whose jaded palate, pleasures and vices alike had palled—of one who had given much to the world and received no in return, who had experienced fickle love, treacherous friends, and ingratitude from all. In all his poems the hero is an ill-used character, at war with fate, loathing the past and dreading the future. We feel that he is trying to describe himself. History does not agree that this was a true picture of Byron ; and his morbid self-consciousness and introspection had an unfavourable effect on his poetry. Great poetry must have foundation of sincere feeling, and very often Byron is not sincere, except when he is inspired by that passion for freedom which is the best feature of his works. In addition, there are many passages of sharp and clever satire in the best of all his works.

Byron was an imperfect human being and many have hastened to point out his faults. He has a strange fascination for young and impressionable minds, and he always earns the sympatny of those who are enemies of hypocrisy and falsehood, side by side with his faults are points of true greatness.

BYRON'S PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Byron enjoyed a celebrity during his lifetime which has rarely fallen to the lot of any writer. It is the fashion at the present day to hear people saying that Byron was not a true poet. The causes of this change are not far to seek. In the first place, Byron was not what is called a *moral* poet. His works are too open to the charges of cynicism,

scepticism and libertinism, to be safely recommended to young readers. In the next place, his works show a range and versatility that make them unsuitable for a course of systematic study. There is no one spirit running through them all, like what we find in the performances of other poets. Again, his greatest poems are too long, too discursive, to stand the reader's patience. Lastly, his work is of too mixed a quality to commend itself warmly to the earnest student of poetry. The burst of popularity which greeted his early performances has itself been the cause of the subsequent neglect into which he fell, and from which he is perhaps never to rise again.

The further causes of this reaction against Byron have been admirably summed up by J. A. Symonds :—

"Students of literature in England began about that period to assimilate Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Landor—those very poets whom Byron, in his uncritical arrogance, had despised or neglected. Their ears became accustomed to versification more exquisite and careful, to harmonies deeper and more refined, if less resonant and brilliant. They learned to demand a more patient and studied delineation of natural beauty, passion more reserved, artistic aims at once more sober and more earnest, and emotions of a less obtrusively personal type. Tennyson and Browning, with all the poet-artists of the present generation, represent as sheer a departure from Byronian precedent as it is possible to take in literature. The very greatness of Byron has unfitted him for an audience educated in this different school of poetry. That greatness was his truth to fact, conceived as action, feeling, energy ; not as the material for picture-painting, reflection, or analysis. Men nursed on the idyllic or the analytic kinds of poetry can hardly do him justice ; not because he is exactly greater, or they indisputably less, but because he makes his best point in a region which is alien to their sympathy...........We are now accustomed to the art which appeals to educated sensibilities, by suggestions and reflections, by careful workmanship and attentive study of form, by artistically finished epitomes of feeling, by picturesquely blended reminiscences of realism, culture, and poetical idealism. Byron's work is too primi-

tive, too like the raw material of poetry, in its crudity and inequality, to suit our Neo-Alexandrine taste. He wounds our sympathies ; he violates our canons of correctness; he fails to satisfy our subtlest sense of art. He showers upon us in profusion what we do not want, and withholds the things for which we have been trained to crave. His personality inspires no love, like that which makes the devotees of Shelley as faithful to the man as they are loyal to the poet. His intellect, though robust and masculine, is not of the kind to which we willingly submit. As a man, as a thinker, as an artist, he is out of harmony with us. Nevertheless nothing can be more certain than Byron's commanding place in English literature. He is the only English poet of the nineteenth century who is also European ; nor will the lapse of time fail to make his greatness clearer to his fellow-countrymen, when a just, critical judgment finally dominates the fluctuation of fashion to which he has been subject."

Matthew Arnold, himself a poet and critic of a very high order, says of Byron that he was "the greatest elemental power in English Literature since Shakespeare." In his *Memorial Verses*, he expresses his admiration for Byron in the following strain :—

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'ed our head, and held our breath,
He taught us little ; but our soul,
Had felt him like the thunder's roll,
With shivering heart the strife we saw,
Of passion with eternal law ;
And yet with reverential awe,
We watched the fount of fiery life,
Which served for that Titanic strife.

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CHAPTER XI

INTRODUCTION TO 'CHILDE HAROLD'

(*A Critical Study of the Poem*)

Date, and History of Composition and Publication, etc:— *Childe Harold* is perhaps the greatest of Byron's works, the poem by which his name will be remembered by posterity. He himself calls it "the longest and the most thoughtful and comprehensive of my compositions." Byron at first intended to call the poem by the name of 'Childe Burun,' *Burun* having been an older form of his own family name. In the first draft of the earlier cantos the hero is uniformly called by this name. The poem was begun at Janina (in Albania) on October 13, 1809. The first and second cantos were published in March 1812. The third canto was finished at Diodati in Geneva in July 1816, and published during the same month. The fourth canto was begun at Venice in 1817, and finished in January of the following year. It was published in the same year. On the publication of the last canto, the complete poem was dedicated to his friend, John Hobhouse.

Few poems of the same length are so sustained in interest as *Childe Harold.* This arises partly from the mode of treatment, and partly from the subject itself. It contains elements drawn from all the different branches of poetry. Its continuity is epic, at least in the style of an episodical epic poem like the *Odyssey* or the *Orlando Furioso* of Aroisto.

It should be dear to every student of the classics. The same thing is true of the descriptions of famous works of ancient art, such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoon, and of architecture, such as the Coliseum; and effects of scenery, various nationalities, like the Spaniards, Turks, and Albanians, and characters, whether

literary, as Tasso and Gibbon, or historical, as Sulla and Napoleon, are presented to us, sketched by a masterly hand. In each case the reader is taught to approach the subject from its most interesting side, and the point of view which is suggested to him is at once so imaginative and so discriminating that it forms an excellent introduction to further enquiry.

Influence of the French Revolution on 'Childe Harold':— *Childe Harold* is offspring of masculine imagination. Although its central figure has been taken for a representative of the English *Jeunesse Daree*, few young English aristocrats, it may be suspected, could have felt with Childe Harold the largeness of European interests, in the past and in the present, in the material and in the moral orders. As we read the poem we assist in the rise and fall of the empires, the court, the camp, the counsil chamber. Under the veil of superficial cynicism, there appears in *Childe Harold* a robust enthusiasm, for what is great, beautiful and heroic in European history : in no way of mere sentimental reverie, but with a strong ardour of imagination, the glories of former ages live again in the verses of Lord Byron, and connect themselves with the life of his own days. The monuments of old renown, the memorials of patriots, of warriors, of poets, the castles of Rhine, the cathedrals of Italy, the Apollo, the Laocoon, are names of those who are forgotten or disregarded. The stated voluptuary displays a vigorous delight in the presence, or the recollection of each of these. Byron's pleasure in nature, in art, in human character, in the memorials of history, has, indeed, nothing in it subtle or exquisite, but he sees the large feature of things, reads of their obvious significance, and receives from them an ample, though not an exquisite, emotion. There is in *Childe Harold* a historical sense, not scientific, and applying itself only to an obtrusive class of facts yet real and vital, and while the poem deals so much with the past it is in spirit essentially modern.

"If Chlide Harold devours all the material of enjoyment which nature and society, the present and the past, afford, still his heart remains craving and unsatisfied. There are numberless tumults and agitations in the poem. Childe

Harold flying himself on life, and when he falls back defeated of joy, gathers up his forces wave-like to fling himself upon life again. The ethical ideal of 18th century had represented us the most precious elements of human character—a wise temperance, moderate desires, a cheerful resignation of patient temperament, good sense : for one who set for himself such an ideal no great dischantment or disillusion was possible to him."

Critical Analysis of the poem : The poet himself called the poem a *romaunt* (an archaic form of 'romance') that is, fanciful story in verse, because the principal character was supposed to be an imaginary personage bearing a title resembling that of the old knights of romance. The poem is in reality partly the record of certain travels of the poet, of famous places, and great names associated with them, and partly the history of his own inner life, his thoughts and feelings, suggested by his wanderings.

As already stated, *Childe Harold* is largely an autobiographical poem inspired by the tour of the Mediterranean countries. It established the reputation of Byron in Europe. It describes the travels and reflections of a pilgrim (Childe Harold, the archaic title "*Childe*" signifying a youth of gentle birth) who has turned from an empty life of pleasure and is now seeking spiritual rebirth.

The first two Cantos describe travel through Portugal, Spain, the Ionian Isles, and Albania. G. Hough observes in his book *The Romantic Poets* : "Both Cantos are tinctured with a rather superficial liberalism, with the exhortations of which Englishmen used to be fond...to the degenerate Greeks and Spaniards to arise and remember their former virtues. All this is more objective and outward looking than Romantic poetry has been hitherto. But the poem has two legs to stand on—the historical and topographical material being one, the other being the character of the hero.......It is, after all, a merit in poetry not to be boring, and Byron is extremely skilful at varying his scenes and subject-matter. The squalor of Lisbon is quickly followed by a Salvato resque picture of Cintra. Beckford is recalled, who once lived there—with perhaps a side-glance at

the parallel between his temperament and Byron's own ; we pass to the contemporary politics—to a bitter denunciation of the Convention of Cintra ; and return to the melancholy and restlessness of the Childe's state of mind. And all this is in the space of twelve stanzas (I, xvi—xxvii). Unlike some other exploiters of a temperament, Byron does not make the mistake of giving it insufficient food. Scenery, politics, history and manners, with a little love-making, give Childe Harold plenty to occupy his mind....

"The second Canto, about Greece and Albania, has the advantage of novel scenes and manners ; but more important is Byron's passionate feeling for Greece. Greece was to see the beginning, as it was to see the end, of his active life. His love for the country and its people was compound of many elements ; the love for the classical past—which has been felt as strongly by idle as by industrious schoolboys ; the love that men who travel much often experience for the first place in which they sojourn, the place that compounds itself with their own undimmed sense of youth and adventure; the real strangeness and adventurousness of Greek and Moselm life ; and the excitement of political liberalism, which was already beginning to stir on behalf of the Greeks against their Turkish overlords. More even than Spain, Greece arouses the pathos of the past, of fallen grandeur (II, i—ix); this fuses naturally with one of Byron's favourite topics of speculation—mortality, and even immortality, if there is any :

Yet if, as holiest men have deemed, there be
A land of souls beyond that sable shore,
To shame the doctrine of the Sadducee
And sophist, madly vain of dubious lore ;
How sweet it were in concert to adore
With those who made our mortal labour light! (II-viii)
And these thoughts in turn recall a mysterious Thou
—whose Love and Life together fled,
Have left me here to love and live in vain (II-ix).

"Thus Byron succeeded in mingling the ruins of the Parthenon with his own being ; and meanwhile Childe Harold is forgotten, to be picked up again, after an excursus on the

iniquitous removal of the Elgin marbles, in stanza XVI, to continue his topographical and amatory adventures. The last half of the Canto is a vivid description of Greek, Albanian and Turkish manners ; the journey ends at Marathon, which leads to a lament for the decay of Greece ; ......then to a lament for mortality in general, and at last a lament for the lost loved one of stanza IX. So Europe and Hellas and history are spread out like a panorama for the romantic temperament to brood over, and *weltschmerz*, that real enough but somewhat vacuous emotion, takes on a new fullness and variety."

The third Canto describes Byron's travels on the continent, from his departure from England on April 25, 1816. "He travelled through the Low Countries and up the Rhine, eventually to Geneva where he was soon joined by the Shelleys who had left England under a similar necessity. These German and Italian travels produced the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*. The formula seems at first sight the same as before—musing on the field of Waterloo, Alpine and Rhineland scenery, reminiscences of Rousseau, Gibbon and Voltaire : but there is, actually, a change of spirit. The distinction between the Childe and his creator is now virtually abandoned; and the author-hero has no need of fictitious sorrows ; he has enough real ones. The opening stanzas give an idea of Byron's state of mind on leaving England, and give, too, a statement of the system of objectified egotism on which his practice is based.

'Tis to create, and in creating, live
A being more intense that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now—
What am I ? Nothing : but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought ! With whom I traverse earth
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.

(III, vi)

"Art is to subserve the ends of life and experience. Byron could never have understood Mr Eliot's distinction

between the man who suffers and the poet who creates. He writes as an expansion of his personal being : and where man and society have failed him, he now projects his feelings into the natural world.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends:
Where rolled the Ocean thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship ; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tone
Of his land's tongue, which he would forsake
For Nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake.
(III, xiii)

"Byron does not look to nature to find in it some spiritual essence that is actually there; he looks to it to echo and include his own passions. Occasionally these are idyllic, as in the stanzas on Clarens (XCIX—CIV), a landscape dedicated to love, because Rousseau made it the scene of the *Nouvelle Heloise*. More often they are tumultuous, as in the description of an Alpine thunderstorm that immediately precedes:

Sky—Mountanis—River—Winds—Lake—
Lightnings, ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder—and a Soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, O Tempests! is the goal ?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles some high nest?

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul—heart—mind—passions—feelings—strong or weak
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel—and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, would speak;

But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a
sword.

(III, xcvi, xcvii)

"The verse hardly repays examination in details; there is crudity and incoherence, and little distinction in individual images; yet the energy of self-assertion in such lines was to alter the emotional scenery of Europe; to the sorrows and the sentiments of Werther, the lubricities and tenderness of Rousseau's *Confessions*, has been added a stormy vigour without which the romantic picture of the heart's landscape would be incomplete. In the closing stanzas of this canto Byron finds a new assurance, the tone of "a man speaking to man", which he was to use to still better purpose, mockingly or seriously, in verses yet to come."

I have not loved the World, nor the World me,
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things—hopes which will not
deceive

And Virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve—
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,
That Goodness in no name—and Happiness
no dream.

(III, cxiv)

The passage in which Byron relates the celebrated battle is one of the best-known passages in the canto. Similarly the description of Alpine scenery is deservedly admired. The opening lines have a peculiar pathos. They are addressed by the poet to his little daughter whom he had not seen since she was five weeks old and whom he was never again to see.

In June 1816, Byron stayed for two days at Ouchy, Swit-

zerland and from there he wrote to Murray, his publisher, saying that he had completed the third Canto of *Childe Harold.* Then Byron left Italy, passing through Milan and Verona, and settled for a time in Venice. From that city he made an expedition in Rome, and on his way to the Italian capital he made brief stops to see Arqua, Ferrata, and Florence. We know that by that time the composition of canto IV was already advanced to some extent. About the last Canto, Hough maintains : "The fourth Canto is more historical in purport ; Dante Petrarch, Tasso, Venice and the ruins of Rome are its themes ; but its central subject is Italy, the longest of Byron's loves among the nations, as Greece was the first and last : and Italy seen as a symbol of all human achievement in arts and arms, its splendour and decay. For all his egoism, Byron is more conscious of Europe, of history, of the march of human destiny, than any of his contemporaries......His large subjects and loose style do not fit into snippets, and the present fashion for minute analysis of short passages, and for divorcing poetry from its historic context can hardly do it justice. A more leisured and less meticulous view of poetry would do much to restore *Childe Harold's* former lustre; and the poem is, in any case, the indispensable prologue to the later satires".

The book met with immediate success, in spite of the cloud that covered the poet's fair fame. Even those who had been most vehement in their attacks on the poet could not resist buying and reading. Byron received £4000 for Cantos III and IV. There is a gap of more than time between this final part of *Childe Harold*, and the original Cantos I and II. The stately measure of the Spenserian stanza is continued, and in the theory there is a vague "Harold" as the narrator. Reading reveals that these are the only links which connect the two portions of the poem : but in all else they are signally different. Byron had gained greatly in the interval both in knowledge of life and in insight into nature : and the result of this increased knowledge and ripeness of judgment is apparent in the greater truth, intenser passion, and higher workmanship of the third and fourth cantos.

A Temple of Fame : As Mr. Nicol has observed, these lines are not only panorama of scenery but also a Temple of Fame. Byron has made every resting place of his pilgrimage memorable by the association of illustrious names of history and literature. Venice brings in mention of Shylock and Othello, Tasso, Pierre, the old dead Doges, and a host of other rich associations from early Venetian history and myth. As in Rome, also, Byron has absorbed her ancient glories and picturesque romance till his lines are saturated with the very spirit of the place. In the first two Cantos Byron had intended a poem in the style of Ariosto, in which grave and humorous would be given a share. The few efforts to introduce a humorous note in the early Cantos, were not successful, and he desisted. He was not humourless, as Don Juan later showed, but there was no place for it in *Childe Harold.* The first two Cantos were a poetical description of his tour, but in III and IV the spirit begins which Carlyle called "Byronism." For a while he kept up the pretence of the Childe, a wandering knight exiled from his home ; but he was "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," and he soon admitted that he himself was the central character. He dropped the archaic colour and obsolete words he had used to give the first two cantos an antique flavour, and used modern language. He dropped ancient romance for the present romance, and ceased to seek inspiration in medieval sources. Scott had revived medievalism, but this was outclassed by the more modern spirit of Byron. Instead of an imaginary knight of old, Byron gave the adventures of his own spirit on pilgrimage. The theme of Cantos III and IV may be described as "the vanity of human wishes," and as the poet muses on the ruins of bygone empires and the graves of famous men, he sees the thoughtlessness of humanity, the despair and uncertainty of life. Nature comforts him, for she remains while empires fall. Byron's cynical attitude towards life was shown in the novel setting, but it is a vein of thought met with throughout the ages, made real references to his personal case.

Goethe saw in Byron the ambitious soul trying to escape from worn-out creeds and artificial conventions.

Byron certainly pin-pointed a number of fallacies and shams. But he learned that to rebel against destiny is useless, for, "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices, make instruments to plague us." He found that he could not defy human limitations and have his desired aims fulfilled without paying the price. His death was like the fall of a giant oak, and was felt deeply by Englishmen and Greeks. Tennyson said, "I thought that everything was over and finished for every one. I walked out alone, and carved 'Byron is dead' on the sandstone."

CHAPTER XII

POPULARITY OF 'CHILDE HAROLD' AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CANTOS

Contemporary reputation of the first two cantos of ***Childe Harold***: Sir Walter Scott has observed : "It was in 1812, when Lord Byron returned to England, that *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* made its first appearance, producing an effect upon the public at least equal to any work which has appeared within this or the last century. Reading is indeed so general among all ranks and classes, that the impulse received by the public mind and on such occasions is instantaneous through all but the very lowest classes of society, instead of being slowly communicated from one set of readers to another as was the case in the days of our fathers. 'The Pilgrimage', acting on such an extensive medium, was calculated to rouse and arrest the attention in a peculiar degree. The fictitious personage, whose sentiments, however, no one could help identifying with those of the author himself, presented himself with an avowed disdain of all the attributes which most men would be gladly supposed to possess. Childe Harold is represented as one satiated by indulgence in pleasure, and seeking change of place and clime—a relief from the tedium of a life which glided on without an object. The assuming of such a character as the medium of cummunicating his poetry and his sentiments indicated a feeling towards the public, which, if it fell short of condemning their favour, disdained, at least, all attempts to propitiate them. Yet the very audacity of this repulsive personification, joined to the energy with which it was supported and to the indications of hold, powerful, and original mind which glanced through every line of the poem, electrified the mass of readers, and placed at once upon Lord Byron's head garland for which other men of genius have toiled long, and which they

have gained late. He was placed pre-eminent among the literary men of his country by general acclamation. Those who had so rigorously censured his juvenile essays, and perhaps 'dreaded such another field', were the first to pay warm and, we believe, sincere homage to his matured efforts; while others, who saw in the sentiments of Childe Harold much to regret and to censure, did not withhold their tribute of applause to the depth of description, and the energy of sentiment which animated the 'Pilgrimage'. If the volume was laid aside for a moment, under the melancholy and unpleasing impression that it seemed calculated to chase hope from the side of man, and to dim his prospects both of this life and of futurity, it was immediately and almost involuntarily assumed again, as our feeling of the author's genius predominated over our dislike to contemplate the gloomy view of human nature which it was his pleasure to place before us. Something which was set down to the angry recollection of his first failure, which might fairly authorise to a high mind to hold the world's opinion in contempt ; something was allowed for the recent family losses to which the poem was alluded, and under the feeling of which it had been partly written ; and it seemed to most readers as if gentler and more kindly features were at times, seem to glance from under the cloud of misanthropy, which the author had flung around his hero. Thus, as all admired the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, all were prepared to greet the author with that fame which is the poet's best reward, and which is chiefly and most justly due to one who, in these exhausted days, strikes out a new and original line of composition.

"It was amidst such feeling of admiration that Lord Byron entered, we may almost say for the first time the public stage on which he has, for four years, made so distinguished a figure. Everything in his manner, person, and conversation tended to maintain the charm which his genius had flung around him ; and those admitted to his conversation, far from finding that the inspired poet sunk into ordinary mortality, felt themselves attached to him, not only by any noble qualities, but by the interest of a mysterious, undefined, and almost painful curiosity."

Comparison of the first two cantos with the third and fourth cantos : The third and the fourth cantos were written by Byron during his self-imposed exile from England. They are written in a different key and there we find Byron a mature thinker and artist. Comparing the first two cantos with the third and fourth cantos, Brandes has observed in his book *Main Currents in 19th Century Literature* : "The stanzas (of the first two cantos) which Byron showed Dallas are melodious, sincere in feeling, and occasionally grand ; they were the first of the full, harmonious strains which were henceforward to issue from the lips of this poet as long as he breathed the breath of life. But they only faintly forecast what the man was to be, with whose fame, ten years later, the continent of Europe rang. As yet, powerful description of nature form the main ingredient in his poetry ; the lyric outbursts are few and far between ; to the casual readers these stanzas would seem simple to convey a world-weary young English aristrocrat's impressions of travel, ennobled by the stateliness of the style—for the tone of *Childe Harold* is as idealistic and serious as that of *Don Juan* is realistic and humorous.

"Childe Harold (in the first draft Childe Burun) leaves his country after an ill-spent youth in a mood of splenetic melancholy leaving behind no friends and no loved one. His is the youthful weariness of life induced by a constitution and state of health inclining to melancholy, and by an all too early satiety of pleasure. There is not a trace in him of the confident gaiety of youth or of its desire for amusement and fame ; he believes, little as he has seen of life, that he has done with everything ; and the poet is so completely one with his hero that not for one moment does he ever soar above him on the wings of irony.

"All this, which made such a powerful impression on the public of Byron's day, is tolerably unattractive to a critical modern reader; the aim at effect is plainly discernible, and the time when vague worldweariness was interesting is past. But no one with a practised eye can fail to see that in this case the mask—for mask it is—covers an earnest and a suffering countenance. The mask is that of a hermit ; pluck it off, and there still remains a man of a solitary nature !

The mask is grandiose melancholy ; throw it away; beneath it there is real sadness. Harold's shell-bedecked pilgrim's cloak may be nothing but a kind of ball domino ; but it covers a youth of ardent feelings, with a keen understanding, gloomy impressions of life, and an unusually strong love of freedom. In Childe Harold's better Ego there is no insincerity ; Byron himself will be answerable for all his hero thinks and feels. And to those who remember what Byron's own conduct, immediately after he wrote *Childe Harold*, was, and who see a direct contradiction between the fictitious personage's elderly menlancholy and the real personage's youthfully ardent pursuit of sensual pleasures, we reply, that the reason of the apparent contradictions is simply this—that Byron, who in his poetry was still an idealist was unable to reveal his whole nature in the earlier cantos of *Childe Harold*. All that is there is certainly Byron, but there was in him, along with this, another and perfectly different man ; and it was not until he wrote *Don Juan* that he succeeded in introducing this other Byron, as he lived and thought and spoke into his poetry. The incompleteness of the self-description must not be mistaken for simulation or affectation.

"When he had become for the second time a homeless and solitary pilgrim, Byron began to occupy himself again with the poem of travel in which his youthful sentiments had found expression. He added the third and fourth cantos to *Childe Harold*. He turned back and felt the youthful feelings once again. But what breadth and depth they had gained in the interval. The chord struck in the First and Second Cantos was composed of three notes—the note of solitariness, the note of melancholy, and the note of freedom. Each one of these had become far clearer and more resonant.

"Throughout the first half of the work it is the feeling of solitariness, but communion with nature ;true solitariness was to wander amidst 'the crowd, the hum, the shock of men.' unloving and unloved. The outbursts in the stanzas referred to are evoked by remembrances of the poet's childhood, spent in the beautiful mountain districts of

Scotland, or of his visit to the hermit's home on 'lonely Athos'. This was still a love of the solitude of nature which resembled Wordsworth's, and which was based upon fear of an unknown, strange world of men and women. The difference between Wordsworth's and Byron's feelings was no more than this, that Wordsworth dwelt silently on the natural impression, in the manner of the countryman and the landscape painter, while Byron seized it with the longing, nervous ardour of the townsman ; and, moreover, that Wordsworth loved nature best in her quiet moods, Byron in her wrath.

In the second half of the work the character of the poet's solitariness has changed. There is a marked difference between the desire for solitary communion with nature which Harold felt as an experienced youth, and that which he felt as a man, at the end of his first circumnavigation of the world of men and things. It was now no longer fear of human beings, but disgust with them, which drove him to take refuge with nature. Society, the best society of a great metropolis, which to the untrained eye seemed so humane, so right-thinking, so refined and chivalrous, had turned its wrong side towards him—and the wrong side is interesting, but not beautiful. He had learned how much friendship the ruined man may reckon on, had learned that the only force which he who is making plans for his future can exactly calculate is the self-love of his fellow-men, with its consequences. So he withdrew into himself again ; and the poetry he wrote at this time is not for men of a sociable nature. But the man who has had even a short experience of what is to turn his back on his fellow-men—who in his desire to escape from them has left his home, his country, in search of a new earth and new skies—who in the solitudes of his choice has felt the sight of an approaching human being equivalent to a foul spot on his pure, free horizon—in the souls of this man and his like, Byron's lyric outburst will find an echo.

"Childe Harold is a solitary. He has learned that he is 'the most unfit of men to herd with man,' because he is

unable 'to submit his thoughts to others...to yield dominion of his mind to spirits against whom his own rebelled.' But,

> Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
> Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home.
> ....
> The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
> Were unto him companionship; they spake
> A mutual language, clearer than the tone
> Of his land's tongue which he would oft forsake
> For Nature's pages glass'd by sunbeams on the lake.

Amongst men he drops like a wild-born falcon with clipt wing. But in his case, to fly from, is not to hate mankind. It is not discontent or defiance which keeps his 'mind deep in its fountain', but fear lest it should 'overboil in the hot throng,' where in a moment

> We may plunge our years
> In fatal penitence, and in the flight
> Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears

He feels that it is better to be alone, and thus to become a portion of what surrounds him. High mountains are a 'feeling' to him, but the hum of human cities is a torture. The mountain, the sky, and the sea are a part of him, and he is a part of them, and to love them is his purest happiness. In solitude he is least alone; then his soul is conscious of infinity, a truth which purifies it from self. Harold has not loved the world, nor has it loved him. He is proud of not having 'flattered its rank breath,' nor bowed the knee to his idols, nor smiled hypocritically, nor echoed the cries of the crowd. He was *among* them, but not *of* them. But he desires that the world and he should part fair foes. 'I do believe', says,

> Though I have found them not, that there may be
> Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
> And virtues which are merciful.................
> That two, or one, are almost what they seem.

The feeling of solitariness gradually becomes the feeling of *melancholy*. This note, too, had been struck In the first two Cantos: but their melancholy was nothing but the discontent

youth. With a wasted youth behind him, he had stood, like a phlegmatically mournful Hamlet, at the grave of Achilles, declaiming, with a skull in his hand, on the worthlessness of life and fame—this young poet who had not yet tasted the sweetness of celebrity, and who in reality hungered for nothing so much as for that very fame which, with so much argumentative philosophy, he feigned to condemn and despise. Now he has tasted it, and learned how little nourishment is to be derived from such food.

His heart is

> Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
> In every fragment multiplies ; and makes
> A thousand images of one that was,
> The same and still the more, the more, it breaks.

In the depth of his dejection he turns to the element in nature which, by its contrast with his present mood, solaces his sufferings—the sea, the free open sea, upon whose name he had laid his hand as a boy, and which knows him as the horse knows his rider. He loves the sea because it is unconquerable, because time cannot even write a wrinkle on its brow, and it rolls now as it rolled at the dawn of creation. But everything in nature reminds him of suffering and warfare. The peal of distant thunder is to him an alarm-bell, 'the knoll of what in me is sleepless—if I rest'. Even the beautiful, calm lake of Nemi does not remind him of anything peaceful and sweet ; he calls it 'calm as cherished hate'."

"His melancholy becomes actually choleric. Could he breathe all his passion 'into *one* word, and that one word were Lightning," he would speak. 'Anything but rest !' is his watchword. 'Quiet to quick bosoms is a hell.' There is a fire in the soul which, once kindled, is quenchless, and the flames of which rise ever higher and wilder ; there is a fever which is fatal to all whom it attacks.

> This makes the madmen who have made men mad
> By their contagion ; Conquerors and Kings,
> Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
> Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things

Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule.

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past.
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

And in a still more despairing mood Harold cries:

We wither from our youth, we gasp away—
Sick—sick; unfound the boon—unslaked the thirst
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first—
But all too late,—so are we doubly crust.
Love, fame, ambition, avarice—'tis the same,
Each idle—and all ill—and none the worst—
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

....

Our life is a false nature—'ts not in
The harmony of things—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—
Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see,
And worse, the woes we see not.'

"In the First Canto of *Childe Harold* we already find the *love of freedom* (the third note in the chord struck by the poem) exalted as the one force capable of emancipating from the despair with which the universal misery has overwhelmed the soul. It has this power because it provides a

practical task. During his first visit to Portugal, Childe Harold exclaimed : 'Oh, that such hills upheld a freeborn race !' And to the Spaniards he cried :

> Awake, ye sons of Spain : awake : advance :
> Lo, Chivalry, your ancient goddess, cries.

And it was in the course of his first tour, too, that he thus apostrophised the subjugated Greeks, who went on hoping for help from other nations :—

> Hereditary bondsmen : know ye not
> Who would be free themselves must strike the below ?
> By their right arms the conquest must be wrought ?
> Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye ? no !
> True, they may lay your proud despoilers low.
> But not for you will Freedom's altars flame.
> ....
> When riseth Lacedomon's hardihood,
> When Thebes Epaminondas rears again,
> When Athen's children are hearts endued,
> When Grecian mothers shall give birth to men,
> Then may'st thou be restored, but not till then.

But his love of liberty at that time was of a purely political nature ; it was the free-born Englishman's indignation at seeing other nations unable to shake off a foreign yoke to which his own nation would never have dreamt of submitting.

"Now he has learned what liberty in the wide, full, universal meaning of the word is. Now he feels that free *thought* is the first essential requisite of all spiritual life.

> 'Yet let us ponder boldly—'tis a base
> Abandonment of reason to resign
> Our right of thought—our last and only place
> Of refuge ; this, at least, shall still be mine ;
> Though from our birth the faculty divine
> Is chain'd and tortured—cabine'd, cribbd, confined,
> And bred in darkness, lest the truth should shine
> Too brightly on the unprepared mind,
> The beam pours in, for time and skill will couch
> the blind.

And it is his intention not merely to ponder, but to act. Invoking Time, the great avenger, whom he reminds that he has borne the hatred of the world with calm pride—and he has experienced all its varieties of hatred,

> From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
> ....
> From the loud roar of foaming calumny
> To the small whisper of the as paltry few,
> And subtlier venom of the reptile crew—

he concludes with the prayer : 'Let me not have worn this iron in my soul in vain !'

"Now, his personal woes shrink into nothing when he beholds the gigantic ruins of Rome ; and he feels the insignificance of his fate compared with that which has swept away the cities of Greece. He writes :—

> Oh Rome ! my country ! city of the soul !
> The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
> Lone mother of dead empires ! and control
> In their shut breasts their petty misery.
> ....
> Wandering in youth I traced the path of him
> The Roman friend of Rome's least mortal mind
> The friend of Tully."

And when not satisfied with liberty of thought alone, he turns his attention to practical matters and occupies himself with the great political struggles of the day, he does not content himself with repeating the old invocations to the departed, or with crying to Venice that she has drowned the glory and honour of centuries in the mire of slavery, and that it would be better for her to be whelm'd beneath the waves. No, he boldly attacks the mighty, the victors of Waterloo, whom he scornfully calls 'the apes of him who humbled once the proud', and then passes from the outward, political aspect of the great European conflicts, to their inner, social significance.

"To all appearance, he says, France has uprooted old prejudices, and laid in ruins 'things which grew, breathed

from the birth of time, only to see dungeons and thrones rebuilt upon the same foundation. '*But this will not endure*'. Mankind have at last felt their strength. And even though France 'got drunk with blood to vomit crime,'

> Yet, Freedom ! yet thy banner, torn, but flying
> Streams like the thunderstorm *against* the wind
> Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying
> The loudest still the tempest leaves behind ;
> Thy tree hath lost its blooms, and the rind
> Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
> But the sap lasts—and still the seed we find
> Sown deep, even in the bosom af the North ;
> So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth,

And of himself the poet writes :—

> But I have lived, and have not lived in vain :
> My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
> Any my frame perish even in conquering pain ;
> But there is that within me which shall tire
> Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire,
> Something unearthly, which they deem not of,
> Like the remember'd tone of a mute lyre."

Thus do the three chief feelings expressed in this beautiful poem —solitariness, melancholy, and love of freedom—gradually become one greater feeling ; the mind of the poet widens and deepens with each Canto. Wordsworth had identified his Ego with England ; Scott and Moore had given the feelings of Scotland and Ireland expression in their poetry ; but Byron's Ego represents universal humanity ; its sorrows and hopes are those of all mankind. After this Ego was, in manly, energetic style, withdrawn into itself and lived for a time absorbed in its solitary grief, that grief widens into compassion for all the sufferings and sorrows of humanity ; the hard, selfish crust of the Ego is broken, and there issues

forth the ardent love of liberty, to encompass and to elevate the poet's whole generation. Now his mind is attuned to worship, and he cries :—

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His alter the high places and the peak
Of earth-o'er grazing mountains,...
. . . . . Come and compare
Column and idol-dwellings Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer.

———

CHAPTER XIII

REASSESSMENT OF 'CHILDE HAROLD'

'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' is the greatest confessional poem of the romantic period. It is also the most authentic record of the period which followed the disillusionments of French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. In fact the pessimistic note of the poem translated the heavy feeling of the contemporary world in such a way that Byron became popular throughout the continent. The poem also served as a picturesque travelogue for those people who could not travel.

It is true that whole cycle of Byronic melancholy can be traced in *Childe Harold*. But these multiple moods move round the romantic ego. The poet searches for an ideal and a perfection that do not exist in the world of reality. "*Childe Harold* is the record of that search and of the states of mind that follow recognition of its inevitable failure, bitterness, remorse, sweet sadness, cynicism, forced stoicism, or exhausted resignation...But the foredoomed pilgrimage goes on, for the longing that drives the Pilgrim is insatiable and it feeds on bright glimpses of the strange and unexplored, the far away and long ago, though they inevitably fade into the light of common day on nearer approach."

Byron becomes melancholy over the fact that reality viewed closely results in a sham and does not satisfy the minds craving for the ideal, the perfect. Human mind seeks some refuge or at least any way through which it may be able to satisfy itself. "One can relish one's misery and find relief in parading the extent of the suffering of one's supersensitive soul attuned to the ideal but forced to face hard reality and the cruelty of disillusionment. Or one can meet the monster by pretending to oneself or others that one has achieved a sort of philosophic calm, by arising above

the lot of mankind, and with stoical restraint or cynical detachment one can then assume an attitude of Godlike superiority to both the insatiable desire for perfection in the experiences of life and love, and the common disappointment in the imperfection of the world as it is. Byron dramatized these moods spectacularly in *Childe Harold*, even in the later more mature cantos. The mawkish and sentimental tone of parts of the first two Cantos is largely responsible, especially in later criticism of his poetry, for the belief that he was a poseur, that he magnified his sins and the acuteness of his mental sufferings". Perhaps it would be truer to say that Byron faced frankly and honestly the basic emtional problems of himself and his time.

Let us look more closely at some of these Byronic poses. "The so-called 'Satanic pose,' the confession of satiety and a sense of sin with which the first canto opens, was only a too literal statement of what was not false but only seems to be so because of the sentimental cliches into which his feelings naturally fell. Byron was a victim of his taste for the elegant and gilded generalizations of eighteenth century poetry, and the habit dogged his best efforts in the Romantic vein. But he was telling the truth in verse when he said he had 'felt the fulness of Satiety' and 'through Sin's long labyrinth had run.' He had come face to face with the hardest reality for the Romantic to bear: the imperfection of human nature."

After this we discuss "the lovely soul" mood." 'Apart he stalked in joyless reverie' because he is supersensitive and stands above, in aspirations if not in deeds, that part of mankind which is content to live in the world of dull reality. In that mood the wild aspects of nature, not the tame Wordsworthian lakes and pastures, soothe his mind. He sees a reflection of his own uncompromising spirit in the torrent, the craggy mountain, the ocean, and the deep woods, 'Where things that own not man's dominion dwell.'

"The worldly wisdom, akin to that in his early verses to John Pigot, except that the tone is melancholy rather than

fictious, grows from observation of the frailty of human nature :

> Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare,
> And Mammon wins his way where Seraphs might despair. (I, 9)

"The sadness of things past, the regretted farewell to people, experiences, or things, once beautiful but now only a memory, the beauty and melancholy of things far away in time or place, or unfamiliar, are all a part of the ineffable Romantic longing for perfection which is constantly disappointed. 'Bound to the earth, he lifts his eye to heaven."

"And so with the love of the picturesque and dramatic, the temporary idealizing of the past and the unfamiliar. The Pilgrim finds Lisbon from the Tagus a beautiful vision of white houses on the hills, but disillusionment follows immediately when he lands and sees "A nation swoln with ignorance and pride," and the "dingy denizens reared in dirt." And the pageantry of the battles in Spain ends with the reflection, a'la Falstaff, of the sophistry of honour. The heroes are the 'broken tools, that tyrants cast away".

The next mood is the mood of moralizing on the ruins and on history. It is said that on the whole it is dominant in *Childe Harold.* But it does not appear often in the first Canto ; and in the second Canto, though 'the glory that was Greece' seems to be the central theme, it takes some peculiar forms. While describing the ruins of Greece, Byron does not emphasize the vanity of ambition.

"Other moods in *Childe Harold* are all different facets of the same thwarted search which is the heart of Romantic aspiration and despair. Cries against restraint and tyrants are born of the desire for freedom from all limitations of the spirit and mind of man. Expressions of the beauty and bitterness of love always are coupled with the implied theme that the unpossessed is sweetest ("Love has no gift so grateful as his wings"). Momentary exultation to scenery or situations...lift the spirit to half-believed transcedence over drab reality. Disillusionment is held at a distance while these picturesque moments last, but over them hovers the

sadness of transience, and there follows moods of disappointment, cynicism, world-weariness, or resignation".

After discussing the first two cantos we turn to the last two. Leslie A. Marchand writes : "As he took up the theme again of *Childe Horald*, 'The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind', he felt free to speak in his own voice without subterfuge or pretense of fiction. Henceforth Harold is Byron's own self, or his acknowledged alter ego. The poetic tone has improved with the genuineness of the expression. But like other romantic poets in moods of dejection...Byron too had misgivings about his ability to sing his woe with the clear voice of his youth :

> Since my young days of passion-joy, or pain—
> Perchance may heart and harp have lost a string—
> And both may jar, it may be, that in vain
> I would essay as I have sung to sing...(III, 4).

"But if anything his heart and harp had gained a string, one whose notes added to the richness and the poignancy of the melody. Here is 'Byronism' in its most poetic statement and finest sweep. At his best he comes close to the transcendental dream of achieving reality in ideal forms, the creations of his mind that somehow through the alchemy of art take a life of their own:

> 'T is to create, and in creating live
> A being more intense that we endow
> With form our fancy, gaining as we give
> The life we image, even as I do now—
> What am I? Nothing : but not so art thou,
> Soul of my thought ! with whom I traverse earth,
> Invisible but gazing, as I glow
> Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
> And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.
>
> (III, 6)

"Although his brain was at the beginning, 'A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame', he had found at times a certain tranquillity beyond tragedy and was able to make a calmer

appraisal of the human situation and his own than had been possible in the hectic autobiographic outpourings of the first cantos:

> Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
> With nought of hope left, but with less of gloom;
> The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
> That all was over on this side the tomb,
> Had made Despair a smilingness assume (III, 16)

Byron's friend, Hobhouse had not good opinion about the third canto. According to him it was filled with 'mystery and metaphysics'. Byron wrote to Moore on January 28,1817: "I am glad you like it; it is a fine indistinct piece of poetical desolation, and my favourite. I was half mad during the time of its composition, between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love unextinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the nightmare of my own delinquencies'. Then he wrote about the inappropriate facetiousness of the poem in a letter.

> "I should, many a good day, have blown my brains out, but for the recollection that it would have given pleasure to my mother-in-law; and, even *then*, if I could have been certain to haunt her..."

"With burning recollections of the chagrin and frustration of the separation, of his love for his half sister Augusta, of the human weaknesses that had seemed to bring his world crashing down at the height of his fame, Byron was never at a lower depth of dsillusionment with the realities of the world and of his own nature, and out of that depth he rose to magnificent poetic achievement. Lady Caroline Lamb, who knew Byron as well as anyone, shrewdly observed after the publication of the third canto of *Childe Harold* "... misfortune and rage have occasioned this and whenever he may speak of *himself* Lord Byron will succeed. Self is the sole inspirer of his genius—he cannot like Homer, Dante, Virgil, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Goldsmith, Tasso write on other subjects well; but what he feels he can deseribe extravagantly well.'

"The 'lonely soul' theme appears again in all its notable forms in the thrid canto and is generally allied

with the most picturesque descriptions of and most eloquent opostrophes to nature, to 'All that expands the spirit, yet appals." His spirit expanded as soon as he left Dover and the waves bounded beneath him 'as a steed that knows his rider. In fact, the third canto radiates the freedom of spirit Byron felt on leaving the "tight little island" and the artificialities of social life into which he had tried to fit himself. He had felt the strain of holding a mask before his real self. 'Secure in guarded coldness, he had mixed. Again in fancied safety with his kind.' He had sought fit speculation, in the crowd, 'But soon he knew himself the most unfit of men to herd with man".

He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebelled.
(III, 12)

Nature in III Canto. Referring to the description of Nature in III Canto L. A. Marchand writes: "The Rhine journey offered ample subjects for meditation to the lonely soul. Here the robber barons' ruined castles started reflections on the *sic transit* theme and heightened the melancholy beauty of the ancient river's crags and vine-clad shores. The Drachenfels inspired a song to his sister, tender and sentimental rather than bitter.

"Lake Leman, and the Alps, and daily association with Shelley drew Byron closer to a transcendental concept of nature than he had ever come before or was ever to reach again. The lonely soul is nourished by 'Natures's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake." Here lonliness could 'renew. Thoughts hid, but not less cherished than of old. Ere mingling with the herd had penned me in their fold.' In this mood he sought to escape not only 'the hum / Of human cities" but the very "clay-cold bonds which round our being cling. And here for a moment he felt the thrill of the transcendental belief he had caught from Shelley:

I live not in myself, but become
Portion of that around me ; and to me
High mountanis are feeling......
(III, 72)

"Then he passed on to a pantheistic stanza which sprang from his reading of Wordsworth at Shelley's behest:

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? (III, 75)

"Although Byron's nature descriptions are drawn from direct observation, he is inclined to rhapsodize rather than to describe accurately, but "Clear, placid Leman" wooed him from the wild world he dwelt into a closer look at nature's features. There follow some stanzas with a restrained power unusual in *Childe Harold*:

There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night
carol more.
(III, 86)

"It is a sweet rather than a bitter melancholy that pervades the description of the storm on the lake and of Clarens, associated with Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise*. But in the end he returns to the proud defiance of the Promethean rebel, which is the dominant motif of the canto:

I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed
To its idolatries a patient knee...

As he began with an apostrophe to his daughter, so he ended:

The child of love! though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in Convulsion! Of thy sire
These were the elements...

Referring to the last canto of *Childe Harold* Marchand observes : "The fourth canto of *Childe Harold* interweaves the pageant of Byron's bleeding heart with the pageant of Italy from Venice to Rome and achieves the finest statement of the *sic transit* theme, retracing Roman history

in the 'marble wilderness' of that 'city of the soul.' The autobiographical part has less of the hectic urgency to relieve the pain of 'love unextinguishable' and 'thoughts unutterable' (though the sense of desolation is still there) than in the third canto. To a certain extent Byron had learned to live with 'the nightmare of......[his] own delinquencies.' Although the dull pain of unfulfilled romantic longing persisted, the sense of loss was deeper, but less acute. The sickness was there but the fever had subsided. After a few months in Venice he confessed that he was 'in very good contentment'. In this strange environment, with an opera setting for common life, he had relaxed and had accepted common pleasures...."

"The fourth canto, unlike the first and third, does not begin with an agonized statement of his own quandary. It is still intensively subjective, but it is a personal view of Venice and her beauty and decay." According to Byron it is "the most thoughtful and comprehensive of my composition......as a mark of respect for what is venerable, and of feeling for what is glorious, it has been to me a source of pleasure in the production.' And he disclaimed finally any pretence to fiction in the character... "...there will be found less of the pilgrim than in any of the preceding [cantos], and that little slightly, if at all, separated from the author speaking in his own person.

"Venice being the 'greatest isle' of his imagination inspired in him a kind of respect for her past glory. She 'sate in state, throned on her hundred isles' and her present glamour in decay :

> She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
> Rising with her tiara of proud towers. (IV, 2)

"The personal interpolations, and there are frequent ones, do not, as in earlier cantos, divert the light for long from the objective theme. The first one develops a thought touched upon in the third canto, the transcendental quality of the mind's creations."

With the Rome section which begins from stanza 78 the record of his travels gives way to something that surpasses even the glowing tribute to Venice in the opening stanzas. The living evidence of that dead world in the ruins of Rome kindled his melancholy imagination into incandescence :

Oh, Rome! My country! City of the Soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Love Mother of dead Empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.

(IV-78)

"Tracing Rome's history from the legendary 'she-wolf', nurse of its founder, down to all the Caesars gave him ample opportunity to extract the obvious lessons concerning the vanity of ambition and the passing of tyrants, a theme whose clear applications in the present he was careful to point up."

After this the poet is once more lost in the ideal contemplation. His imagination is fired at the sight of supposed fountain of Egeria, a legendary spirit who loved a mortal :

Oh Love! no habitant of earth thou art—
And unseen Seraph, we believe in thee,—
A faith whose martyrs are the broken heart,
But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see
The naked eye, thy form, as it should be;
The mind hath made thee, as it peopled Heaven,
Even with its own desiring phantasy......

After touching a number of topics, the mood of earlier cantos is revived in Byron. The pilgrimage comes to an end at Albano. The view of the ocean revives the old memories.

"The echo of *Childe Harold's* melancholy music lingers in the mind of the reader. "The conviction remains that Byron has voiced the common thoughts of all men to a degree. Seen in the light of his own time it surpasses anything else in romantic autobiogrphy in unclouded clarity of statement and revelation of an active and troubled mind."

The Hero of the Poem; When *Childe Harold* was first published, the public naturally believed that Byron's own character was represented in the person of Childe Harold. But the author himself vehemently denied it. We know that in the original draft the title was 'Childe *Burun*', Burun being an earliest form of the poet's family name; but still Byron was not wrong in denying the identity. The correct explanation seems to be that given by Prof. Tozer—that the Childe was, no doubt, in the first instance a self-portraiture, but exaggerated and darkened in its unfavourable traits, partly from Byron's love of notoriety, and partly from genuine disgust at his earlier life. Probably, as the poem proceeded, the writer found that the fictitious character he had thus introduced was useful to him as a central figure to which his experiences and observations might be attributed, and that this expedient facilitated the poet's transition from one subject to another, and prevented the too frequent use of description pure and simple.

Referring to the autobiographical identification of Byron himself with Childe Harold, Hough remarks : "All the features that are soon to become so familiar—the fatal ancestry, the excesses, the satiety—are celebrated in the first few stanzas ; and most characteristics of all, the collocation of gloomy debauchery with an ideal of purity once glimpsed but now unattainable and abandoned :

For he through sin's long labyrinth had run,
Not made atonement when he did amiss,
Had sighed to many though he loved but one,
And that loved one, alas ! could ne'er be his.
Ah, happy she ! to 'scape from him whose kiss
Had been pollution unto aught so chaste ;
Who soon had left her charms for vulagar bliss
And spoiled her goodly lands to gild his waste,
Nor calm domestic peace had ever deigned to taste.

(I, V)

"This kind of hero has, of course, his literary ancestors. The pride and evil go back to Milton's Satan, the gloom and the peculiar relation to women to some of the heroes of the novel of terror. But the specially Byronic contribution is the interweaving into the fictitious image of a number of more or less personal details, so that a shifting, but ever present relationship between self-portraiture and fantasy is set up. It was this romantic self-portraiture that was to have such an extensive effect on the romanticism of the continent. By its means Byron is enabled to exploit his personality to the full, without being tied within the limits of the authentic confession."

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CHAPTER IV

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF BYRON IN "CHILD HAROLD"

Childe Harold combines in itself beauties drawn from all the different branches of poetry. It resembles an Epic in its continuous flow; an Idyll, in the descriptions of scenery and sketches of life and character it contains ; a Lyric, in its outbursts of personal feeling ; a Drama in its rhetorical passages, soliloquies, and apostrophes. This gives the poem a rich variety which further increased by the peculiar features of the different cantos, which not only treat of different countries (Spain, Greece, Switzerland, Italy) and others but are written in a different tone of sentiment : the first being melodramatic, the second pathetic, the third treating of the romantic in nature, and the fourth of the romantic in history and art.

(1) **Rich suggestiveness**: The rich suggestiveness of the poem is one of its distinguishing features, and constitutes perhaps its most abiding charm. This is due partly to the varied character of the subjects treated—of history, biography, literature, art, topography and partly to the eloquent and imaginative descriptions of foreign scenery, manners and customs. "Even resting-place in the pilgrimage is made interesting by association with illustrious memories. Coblentz introduces the tribute to Marceau ; Clarens almost a complete review, in five verses, of Rousseau; Lausanne and Ferney the quintessence of criticism on Gibbon and Voltaire. A tomb in Arqua suggests Petrarch; the grass-grown streets of Ferrara lead in the lines on Tasso, the white walls of the Etrurian Athens bring back Alfieri and Michael Angelo, and the prose bard of the hundred tales, and Dante, "buried by the upbraiding shore," and—

> The starry Galileo and his woes.

(2) **Absence of Plan** : Another noticeable feature of the poem is the absence of any plan. This was of course inevitable in a work which is at best the journal of a tour ; and hence it proceeds from point to point as thoughts suggest themselves to his mind during the course of the journey. But this absence suited Byron's nature; for "Byron needed some substratum of fact or personal emotion for his imaginative edifices, and wrote best when he was least hampered by theories of art."

(3) **'Childe Harold' no mere Guide-book**: And yet *Childe Harold* is no mere journal of a tour, no mere versified guide-book, because the poet does not note all that is famous or interesting in the places he visits. For instance, when passing through Seville, he says not a word about its cathedral ; Cadiz does not suggest any of its Phoenician memories ; the antiquities of Athens find no record in his pages ; Sparta is scarcely even mentioned ; nor does Troy receive that tribute which one should expect from a cultured poet. Similarly, in the later cantos, Brussels recalls only the famous ball ; Geneva does not remind him of Calvin, but of Rousseau ; there is not a word of Savonarola in connection with Florence, nor of the great Popes in connection with Rome.

(4) **Absence of patriotic feeling** : We notice, again, an absence of patriotic feeling in the pictures of *Childe Harold*. In the earlier cantos Byron describes a country, which had very recently been the scene of a number of famous battles, whose glory was then quite fresh in the minds and hearts of Englishmen ; yet in the description of Vimiero, Talavera, Barossa, Albuera, there is not the slightest evidence of patriotic feeling. In the beginning of the third canto, Byron describes the field of Waterloo, which he visited only a few months after the memorable battle ; yet, though the lines beginning—

> Stop ! for thy tread is on an Empire's dust :

are full of beauty and sublimity, Byron does not in the least show any pride in the national achievement. "Prove before ye praise," he tells us, and sums up the

whole description with a very inadequate reflection :

> Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
> Their children's lips shall echo them, and say :
> 'Here where the sword united nations drew,
> Our countrymen were warring on that day !
> And this is much, and all which will not pass away.

This want of patriotic feeling was one of Byron's many affectations. Patriotism is a commonplace feeling, and he disdained to be like other men. But in the case of Waterloo there is a special reason why he has treated it so coldly : Byron was a champion of liberty and a hater of tyranny, and in his judgment Waterloo merely revived a thraldom, deposed one tyrant merely to set up another in his place.

(5) **Descriptive Narrative**: The quality for which Byron's poetry in general, and *Childe Harold* in particular, is chiefly distinguished, is his power of vividly describing single incidents. These descriptions "perpetually rise from a basis of rhetoric to a real height of poetry. Byron's 'Rhine' flows, like the river itself, in a stream of 'exulting and abounding' stanzas. His 'Venice' may be set beside the masterpieces of Ruskin's prose. They are together the joint pride of Italy and England. The tempest in the third canto is in verse a splendid microcosm of the favourite, if not the prevailing mood, of the writer's mind. In spite of manifest flaws, the nine stanzas beginning 'It is the hush of night,' have enough in them to feed a high reputation. The poet's dying day, his sun and moon contending over the Rhoetian hill, his Thrasymene, Clitumnus, and Velino show that his eye has grown keener, and his imagery at least more terse, and that he can occasionally forget himself in his surroundings. The Drachenfells, Ehrenbreitstein, the Alps, Lake Leman, pass before us like a series of dissolving views."

The eloquent and imaginative description of foreign scenery, climate and manners which Byron gave in this work introduced something unique in English poetry. In the first two Cantos description is mixed with mild satire

while in the last two the note of confession creeps in. In these two Cantos a deeper knowledge of life and study of Nature is added to the force of rhapsody. Nature is not simply described as in the earlier Cantos there is a greater intensity of feeling for her.

In descriptive power only a few poets have equalled Byron. Grierson observes, "As a descriptive poem *Childe Harold* is the greatest of its kind, the noblest panoramic poem in English." Byron's descriptions are vivid, free and daring. "In the stormy strength of his descriptions," writes Dixen, "In the fervent delineation of fiery possessions, Byron is unsurpassed." For subtleties and shades of colouring and small accuracies of outline be cared little. He was a painter on a large canvas. The succession of pictures in *Childe Harold* has a certain grandeur not easily found elsewhere. He may be careless of details but he knew how to dash off a scene or a series of scenes in a few lines full of energy and movement. What happens to those who were present at Waterloo ?—

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the single sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms-the-day
Battle's magnificently stern array !
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which has own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse-friend and foe in red burial bent.

The Waterloo stanzas in Canto III equal Barbour's Bannockburn and Scott's description of the battle of Flodden Field. Griersion speaks of "the rolling guns and clattering squadrons of stanzas on Waterloo." Equally masterly in description is the description of Duchess of Rickmond's ball:

There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men :
A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,

Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spoke again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell ;
But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell,

Did ye not hear it ? No ; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street ;
On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined ;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with fling feet—
But hark ! that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
Arm ! Arm ! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar !

Another example of Byron's ability to dash off a sketch with dexterity is seen in his picture of London as :

A mighty mass of brick and smoke and shipping.

Byron was a master not only of description of social scenes. His fine picture of sunset at the beginning of *The Curse of Minerva* is remarkable for its truth of observation :

Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race he run,
Along Morea's hills the setting sun ;
Not as in northen climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light :

This is true generally of the local colour in his eastern tales. It is not borrowed from books but comes from first-hand observation.

The description of Sea Storm in Canto II of *Don Juan* is rendered in stanzas that a break and glitter, hiss and laugh, murmur and move like waves that sound and subside."

The glories and wrecks of Rome are again and again portrayed in the Canto.

Byron's description may be characterized as "associative description." Clarens leads him to think of Rousseau, Lausanne suggests thoughts of Voltaire, the streets of Ferrara bring to his mind Tasso. The character sketches of Napo-

leon, Rosseau, Voltaire are rendered with penetration and intuition. Byron possessed the supreme gift of vivid character portrayal. In the portrait of Lady Adeline (Canto XIII. *Don Juan*) there is a subtle analysis of female character. It should also be noted that Byron was one of the few masters of jesting and sarcastic delineation.

(6) **Occasional Mysticism.** Among the fine bursts of passion and touches of desctiption that abound in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, one can occasionally discover at one of mysticism—a sublimity that loses itself in its own vagueness —that one meets so constantly in the writings of Shelley. A notable instance of this occurs in the stanzas on Clarens in Canto III. This was no doubt due to the influence of Shelley, whom Byron knew so well and met so constantly, while living at the Villa Diodati near Geneva. To Shelley's influence too may be ascribed that pantheistic tone we sometimes detect in Byron's lines, as in the following from Canto III :—

> I live not in myself, but I become
> Portion of that around me ; and to me
> High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
> Of human cities torture ; I can see
> Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
> A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
> Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee.
> And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
> Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

Secret of its success. *Childe Harold* is one of those few works of modern poetic literature which, on their appearance, commanded a phenomenal sale. The book ran through seven editions in four weeks. The secret of this immense success was that the poem was "just on the level of its age." Its flowing verse, defaced by rhymical faults perceptible only to finer ears, its prevailing sentiment, occasional boldness relieved by pleasing platitudes, its half-affected rakishness, here and there elevated by a rush as of morning air, and its frequent richness and splended description, were all appreciated by the fashionable London of the Regency ; while the comparatively mild satire, not

keen enough to scarify, only gave a more piquant flavour to the whole."

STYLE OF THE POEM

The style of *Childe Harold* is wonderfully rich, highly coloured, and gorgeously ornamental. This makes the language in places difficult to understand, and at times positively perplexing. The difficulty is enhanced by the poet's employ ment of words in unusual meanings and applications, by his condensed forms of expression, and by his rapid and abrupt transitions. A few of the leading peculiarities of the style of *Childe Harold* are noted below :—

I. Beauties of style: (1) Co ıtrast:The first point. to note here is the effect produced by contrast, which is to be noticed in every part of the poem. This pleasing effect can be traced in the arrangement of the various parts of a subject in the proper order, as in following up the description of the thunderstorm on the Lake of Geneva to the description of the "dewy morn" (III, 92-98). Contrast is also often applied to describe changes of fortune : *e. g.*—

'Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou !'
(III, 37)

or to heighten pathos, as in the stanzas describing the ball at Brussels preceding the battle of Waterloo (III, 181—198), and particularly in the following lines :—

And cheeks all pale which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness ;
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn should rise!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valour, rolling on the foe
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low.

The fresh green tree
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live.

Contrast is also frequently noticeable in the words and expressions. Examples will be found in abundance, but the

following are typical instances :—

> Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
> In solitude, where we are *least* alone ; (III. 90.)
> Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer (III. 107.)
> And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
> Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd, (III. 415-16.)
> All tenantless, save to the crannying wind,
> Or holding dark communion with the cloud. (III. 47.)

(2) **Dramatic Touches** : The next point to notice is the effect of the dramatic touches interspersed through the poem. These give life and variety to the descriptions that would otherwise grow weary and monotonous. They generally consist in apostrophising the localities which the poet is visiting, as in—

> But thou, exulting and abounding river ! (III. 50.)
> Clarens ! sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep Love !
> (III. 99.)
> Lausanne! and Ferney ! Ye have been the abodes
> Of names which unto you bequeathed a names;
> (III. 105.)

—or in addressing an imaginary auditor, as in—

> Stop ! for thy tread is on an Empire's dust! (III. 145.)
> Did ye not hear it ? No : 'twas but the wind,
> Or the car rattling o'er the stony street. (III. 22.)

(3) **Artistic Unity**:The very nature of the subject in *Childe Harold* prevented the possibility of preserving any kind of unity in the poem. The only pretences to that artistic quality are certain ingenious devices with which the poet smooths the transition from one topic to another. Sometimes the imaginary hero is brought in to serve this purpose, as in the following places :—

> Long-absent Harold reappears at last ; (III. 8.)
> Thus Harold only said, and passed along (III. 52.)

Sometimes an exclamation marks the transition, as in—

> Away with these ! (III. 46.)

Sometimes a fanciful point of relationship is discovered

between one subject and another, as between the life of action and the life of contemplation, when the poet passes to a description of the Rhine after speaking of Napoleon's ambition.

II. Figures of Speech: (1) Metaphor: It has already been stated that the style of *Childe Harold* is highly ornamental. Let us now study the chief of these ornaments, or figures of speech. The first of these is metaphor. Byron's metaphors are ordinarily commonplace, but in some cases they are extremely felicitious, richly suggestive, and peculiarly apt. A few instances will suffice :—

In pride of place here last the eagle flew
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain, (III. 158.)
But they,
Who in oppression's darkness caved had dwelt,
They were not eagles, nourished with the day,
What marvel, then, if they sometimes mistook their
prey ? (III. 83.)

The starlight dews
All silently their tears of love instill. (III. 87.)

(2) **Similes :** Byron's similes are usually brief and compressed, not like those of Milton or some of Tennyson's, spinning out into minute detail. There is only one example of what has been called a "tailed" simile, in Canto III—

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies ; and makes
A thousand images of one that was,
The same, and still the more, the more it breaks.
(III. 33)

Byron's similes are, again, drawn from many sources, but chiefly from natural objects ; sometimes also he illustrates material by spiritual phenomena, as when the twin cliffs of the Rhone valley are compared to

Lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted ;
(III. 94.)

Byron seldom uses more than one simile to illustrate the same point. In one place in the third Canto, however, he uses as many as six similes to illustrate the truth that life may lose its interest and happiness but may outwardly remain the same :—

The tree will wither long before it fall ;
The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn ;
The roof-tree sinks, but moulders on the hall
In massy hoariness ; the ruined wall
Stands when its wind-worn battlements are gone ;
The bars survive the captive they enthral ;
The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun :
(III. 48.)

(3) **Personification** : Personification may be defined as a figure of speech by which abstract ideas, and the like, are invested with personal attributes, and have a living agency ascribed to them. Byron's personifications, at least those we come across in the later cantos of *Childe Harold*, are of the simpler kind, unlike the allegorical ones of Spenser or the other moralistic poets of the Elizabethan era. The following are a few examples :—

Beneath these battlements, within those walls
Power dwelt amidst her passions : (III. 48.)
In his lair
Fix'd passion holds his breath : (III. 1. 792.)

(4) **Oxymoron** : Oxymoron is a figure of speech which consists in putting together two apparently contradictory ideas. It is employed sometimes for purposes of irony, sometimes to produce a kind of agreeable surprise in the mind of the reader. The following are a few of the examples met with in Canto III :—

Vitality of poison,— (III. 34.)
The peopled desert— (III. 73.)
A populous solitude of beasts and birds. (III. 102.)

(5) **Climax**: Climax may be defined as a way of making a statement by making it more and more forcible. The

best example of this figure of speech in the third Canto is—

And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before (l. 197.)

Allied to this is Byron's peculiar mode of making a statement by gradually making it *less and less* forcible, as in the following line :—

That two, or one, are almost what they seem.
(III. l. 1065.)

(6) **Transferred Epithet** : Transferred Epithet (or Hypallage) consists in applying an epithet from one of two nouns to another to which it does not properly apply ; *e. g.*—

By Coblentz on a rise of *gentle* ground (l. 536.)

Here the epithet 'gentle' is properly applicable to 'rise,' but has been transferred from 'rise' to 'ground' for the sake of variety.

(7) **Abstract for Concrete**: This is a very common figure of speech, so much so that it may be called only a turn of expression rather than a figure of speech. The following may be quoted as examples :—

And many a tower for some *fair mischief* won.
(l. 440.)

Here 'fair mischief' means 'a mischievous fair one or lady.'

When shell and ball
Rebounding idly on her *strength* did light. (l. 357.)

Here 'strength' stands for 'strong fortifications.'

I have not flattered its rank breath nor bow'd
To *its idolatries* a patient knee. (l. 1050.)

Here 'idolatries' is used for 'objects for idolatry.'

III. **Grammatical Irregularities**: Byron's grammar is often singularly careless. Sir Walter Scott speaks of him as "managing his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality." Grammatical irregularities were inevitable in the case of a poet who wrote so fast. The lesser breaches of rule may be excused as poetic licence, but the graver ones are indefensible. But even these do

not stand in the way of the reader's clearly understanding the poet's meaning, they are merely evidences of his negligence. A few of these are noted below:—

(1) **Pendent participle clauses**: The best example of this is in the very beginning of the third eanto—

A waking with a start,
The waters heave around me: (1. 5.)

The following is more abrupt in its transition:—

And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned. (1. 59.)

(2) **Various kinds of Ellipsis.** Of these the omission of the relative or antecedent is the commonest; *e.g.*—

There is a spot should not be passed in vain. (1. 600.)
What want these outlaws conquerors should have
But history's purchased page to call them great?
(11. 429—430.)

(3) **Various kinds of condensed expression**: Allied to these elliptical forms are various condensed forms of expression as the following:—

For daring made thy rise as *fall.* (1. 322.)

Here these two words stand for 'as it made thy fall.'

Zeugma : One special form of condensed expression is called *zeugma*, or the use of one word with two others, when it properly applies to only one of them; *e.g.*—

Banners on high, and battles passed below (1. 420.)

Here the verb 'passed' properly applies only to battles, but has been used for 'banners' as well.

IV. Versification : **(1) The Spenserian Stanza** : *Childe Harold* is written in the form of verse known as the Spenserian stanza, so named because Spenser's famous poem *The Faery Queene* is written in it. This form was especially well suited for Byron's purpose, because the subject is constantly changing, so that the stanzas are like "not so much the links of a chain, as beads on a string."

The Spenserian stanza consists of nine lines, which are of equal length (5 feet), except the last, which is called an Alexandrine, and has one foot more than the rest. Each of these lines has as iambic rhythm. In each stanza there are three and only three rhymes, falling in the following order:—*a b a b b c b c c*. Lines 1, 3 have one rhyme; 2, 4, 5, 7 another; and lines 6, 8, 9 another. Thus we see these there is alternative effect of rhyme, and herein monotony is avoided by a process of skilful interweaving, so that the similarity of sound falls pleasantly upon the ear; and the final Alexandrine line gives a certain sonorous cadence to the whole, and further helps to relieve monotony. The Spenserian stanza admits of great variety, which results from shifting the position of the more important pauses.

(2) **Double rhymes.** Double rhymes are cases where the last *two* syllables of the verse rhyme. The best example of this in the third canto is the following entire stanza:—

Italia ! too, Italia ! looking on thee,
Full flashes on the soul the light of ages.
Since the fierce Carthaginian almost won thee,
To the last halo of the chiefs and sages
Who glorify the consecrated pages;
Thou wert the throne and grave of empires; still,
The fount at which the panting mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

CANTO THE THIRD

1

Is THY face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And then we parted,—not as now we part
But with a hope—
Awaking with a start,
The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices : I depart,
Wither I know not; but the hour's gone by,
When Albion's lessening shores could grieve or glade mine eye.

Byron leaves home, but not in sorrow, though he is fondly reminded of his daughter at the moment of parting.

2

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on ; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

His joy at the sight of the sea. He is going on an aimless voyage.

3

He resumes the subject of Childe Harold's fortunes, though it is somewhat sadly associated in his mind.

In my youth's summer I did sing of one,
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind:
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards : in that Tale I find
The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,
Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,
O'er which all heavily the journeying years
Pold the last sands of life,—where not a flower appears.

4

He feels his poetic faculties as having deteriorated, but still sticks to the subject.

Since my young days of passion—joy, or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,
And both may jar : it may be, that in vain
I would essay as I have sung to sing.
Yet though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me—it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.

5

Only men qualified by experience to judge can explain why poets seek solitude to give expression to their thoughts and feelings.

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits him ; nor below
Can love or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance : he can tell
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpair'd, though old, in the soul's haunted cell.

6

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing : but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' dearth.

Poets live an ideal life in their thoughts and feelings.

7

Yet must I think less wildly :—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame :
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time cannot abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.

Byron feels it necessary to sober down his thoughts and feelings, but finds it difficult to do so at this stage of his life.

8

Childe Harold reappears before the public—a changed man.

Something too much of this :—but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal.
Long absent HAROLD reappears at last ;
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal ;
Yet time, who changes all, had alter'd him
In soul and aspect as in age; years steal
Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

9

Harassed with remorse he sought peace in travel, but in vain.

His had been quaff'd too quickly, and he found
The dregs wormwood ; but he fill'd again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deem'd its spring perpetual ; but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which gall'd for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clank'd not ; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step he took through scene. many a

10

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mix'd
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deem'd his spirit now so firmly fix'd
And sheath'd with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurk'd behind;
And he, as one, might 'midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation; such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

Yet before leaving his country he had tried to amuse himself in the society of his fellow men.

11

But who can view the ripen'd rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex, roll'd
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,
Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond prime.

But once in society he plunged himself in its dissipations.

12

But soon he found himself unfit for society.

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man ; with whom he held
Little in common ; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd
In youth by his own thoughts ; still uncompell'd
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd ;
Proud though in desolation ; which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

13

He travelled abroad to take delight in Nature.

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends ;
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home ;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam ;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship ; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For nature's pages glass'd by sunbeams on the lake.

14

Like the Chaldean, he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams ; and earth-born jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite :
Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy ; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

He also took delight in the contemplation of the starry heavens, from which too he was dragged down by his earthly nature.

15

But in man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat.

So he found himself recalled to society which wore him and made him ill-tempered.

16

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild,—as on the plunder'd wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,—
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

He accordingly set out on his travels again, in a gloomy mood of despair.

17

Harold visits the field of Waterloo

Stop !—for thy tread is on an Empire's dust !
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below !
Is the spot mark'd with no colossal bust ?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show ?
None ; but the moral's truth tells simpler so,
As the ground was before, thus let it be ;—
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow !
And is this all the world has gain'd by thee,
Thou first and last of fields ! king-making Victory ?

18

Reflections on Waterto.

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo !
How in an hour the power which gave annals
Its gifts transferring fame as fleeting too !
In 'pride of place' here last the eagle flew,
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through ;
Ambition's life and labours all were vain ;
He wears the shatter'd links of the world's broken chain.

19

He speculates over the probable moral effect of the victory.

Fit retribution ! Gaul may champ the bit
And foam in fetters:—but is Earth more free?
Did nations combat to make *One* submit ;
Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
What ! shall reviving Thraldom again be
The patch'd-up idol of enlight'd days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to thrones? No; *prove* before ye praise !

20

If not, o'er one fallen despot boast no more !
In vain fair cheeks were furrow'd with hot tears
For Europe's flowers, long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards ; in vain years
Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears,
Have all been borne and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions ; all that most endears
Glory, is when the myrtle wreathes a sword
Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant lord.

If Waterloo has abolished tyranny altogether from the world, the battle has not been fought in vain.

21

There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men ;
A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell ;
But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell !

Description of the ball held at Brussels on the eve of Quatre Bras.

22

Did ye hear it?—No; 't was but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street ;
On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined ;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But hark !—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
Arm ! Arm ! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar !

The sound of distant guns interrupted the festivities.

23

The Duke of Brunswick hastened to the fight and fell in that battle.

Within a window'd niche of that high hall
State Brunswick's fated chieftain ; he did hear
That sound the first amidst the festival,
And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear ;
And when they smiled because he deem'd it near,
His heart more truly knew that peal too well
Which stretch'd his father on a bloody bier,
And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell ;
He rush'd into the field, and foremost fighting, fell.

24

This stanza describes the hurried departure of the officers for the field and their separation from their friends.

Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blush'd at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from our young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful more could rise !

25

The rapid preparation for battle, and the alarm of the citizens.

And there was mounting in hot haste : the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war ;
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar ;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star ;
While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—'The foe ! they come ! they come !'

26

The Cameronian Highlanders marched to battle to the sound of their bag-pipe.

And wild and high the 'Cameron's gathering' rose !
The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's hills
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills,
Savage and shrill ! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,
And Evan's, Donald's fame rings in each clansman's ears!

27

The troops pass through the forest of Quatre Bras.

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with nature's stear-drops as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e' er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave,—alas !
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valour, rolling on the foe
And burning with high hope, shall moulder cold and low.

28

in the course of a single day what I ves were lost !

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms,—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array !
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is cover'd thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heap'd and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent !

29

Their praise is hymn'd by loftier harps than mine :
Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
Partly because they blend me with his line,
And partly that I did his sire some wrong,
And partly that bright names will hallow song ;
And his was of the bravest, and when shower'd
The death-bolts deadliest the thinn'd files along,
Even where the thickest of war's tempest lower'd
They reach'd no nobler breast than thine, young gallant Howard !

Tribute to Major Howard, one of the fallen heroes of Waterloo.

30

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing had I such to give ;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turn'd from all she brought to those she could not bring.

Byron's lament for Major Howard's death.

31

Byron here expresses his sympathy with those who mourned the loss of relations killed at Waterloo.

I turned to thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake ;
The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for ; though the sound of Fame
May for a moment soothe, it cannot slake
The fever of vain longing, and the name
So honour'd but assumes a stronger, bitterer claim.

32

Sorrow ultimately comes to an end outwardly, though inwardly it may have eaten the heart.

They mourn, but smile at length : and smiling mourn :
The tree will wither long before it fall ;
The hull drives on though mast and sail be torn ;
The roof-tree sinks, but moulders on the hall
In massy hoariness : the ruin'd wall
Stands when its wind-worn battlements are gone ;
The bars survive the captive they enthral ;
The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun ;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on :

33

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies ; and makes
A thousand images of one that was,
The same, and still the more, the more it breaks ;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
Living in shatter'd guise : and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

This stanza illustrates the truth contained in the last by means of a simile taken from a broken mirror.

34

There is a very life in our despair,
Vitality of poison,—a quick root
Which feeds these deadly branches ; for it were
As nothing did we die : but Life will suit
Itself to Sorrow's most detested fruit,
Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's shore,
All ashes to the taste : Did man compute
Existence by enjoyment, and count o'er
Such hours 'gainst years of life,—say, would he name three-score ?

Bereavement has a strange power of supporting life.

35

The Psalmist number'd out the years of man :
They are enough ; and if thy tale be *true*,
Thou, who didst grudge him even that fleeting span,
More than enough, thou fatal Waterloo !
Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
Their children's lips shall echo them, and say—
'Here, where the sword unitèd nations drew,
Our countrymen were warring on that day !'
And this is much, and all which will not pass away.

The scriptural average of 70 years is a high average, considering the sorrows of life.

36

In this stanza the poet proceeds to mroalize on the fate of Napoleon and to give an estimate of his character.

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,
Whose spirit, antithetically mixt,
One moment of the mightiest and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt ;
Extreme in all things ! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine or never been ;
For daring made thy rise as fall ; thou seek'st
Even now to re-assume the imperial mien,
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene !

37

It is at the moment of his fall that Napoleon has attained the greatest fame.

Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou !
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who woo'd thee once, thy vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself ; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deem'd thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

38

Napoleon's worst fault was that he failed to notice the weak points of his character.

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low,
Battling with nations, flying from the field ;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield ;
An empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,
But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skill'd,
Look through time own, nor curb the lust of war,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star,

39

Yet well thy soul hath brook'd the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoil'd and favourite child,
He stood unbow'd beneath the ills upon him piled.

Yet the calm foıtitude with which Napoleon bore adversity is commendable.

40

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steel'd thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn, which could contemn
Men and their thoughts; 't was wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wret to use
Till they were turn'd unto thine overthrow:
'T is but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

But his habitual scorn of men, which he took no pains to conceal, led to his ruin.

41

If, like a tower upon a headlong rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had help'd to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone;
The part of Philip's son was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes to mock at men;
For sceptred cynics earth were far too wide a den.

It was on the co-operation of his fellow men that his success depended.

42

In this and the three following stanzas Byron makes some reflections on ambition.

But quite to quick bosom is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane ; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire ;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest ; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

43

Ambition is at bottom but madness.

This makes the madmen who have made man mad
By their contagion ; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquite things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool ;
Envied, yet how unenviable ! what strings,
Are theirs ! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule.

44

Ambition causes a restlessness which is at last ruinous.

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die ;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

45

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most warpt in clouds and snow ;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those blow.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And for *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

The path of ambition is one beset with dreadful difficulties and dangers.

46

Away with these ! true Wisdom's world will be
Within its own creation, or in thine,
Maternal Nature ! for who teems like thee,
Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine ?
There Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties ; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells
From gray but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells.

In this stanza the poet passes on to a description of the beauties of the Rhine by contrasting ambition with love of Nature.

47

And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd,
All tenantless, save to the crannying wind,
Or holding dark communion with the cloud.
There was a day when they were young and proud ;
Banners on high and battles pass'd below :
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.

Description of the Rhine castles, now is ruins.

48

These castles belonged to feudal chiefs who ruled their estates like kings.

Beneath these battlements, within those walls,
Power dwelt amidst her passions ; in proud state
Each robber chief upheld his armed halls,
Doing his evil will, not less elate
Than mightier heroes of a longer date.
What want these outlaws conquerors should have
But history's purchased page to call them great ?
A wider space, an ornamented grave ?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls were full as brave.

49

Their wars and loves were equally fierce.

In their baronial feuds and single fields,
What deeds of prowess unrecorded died !
And Love, which lent a blazon to their shields,
With emblems well devised by amorous pride,
Through all the mail of iron hearts would glide ;
But still their flame was fierceness, and drew on
Keen contest and destruction near allied,
And many a tower for some fair mischief won,
Saw the discolour'd Rhine beneath its ruin run.

50

The beauty of the river Rhine.

But Thou, exulting and abounding river !
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever
Could man but leave thy bright creation so,
Not its fair promise from the surface mow
With the sharp scythe of conflict,—then to see
Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
Earth paved like Heaven ; and to seem such to me,
Even now what wants thy stream ?—that it should Lethe be.

51

The historical associations of the locality are forgotten.

A thousand battles have assail'd thy banks,
But these and half their fame have pass'd away,
And Slaughter heap'd on high his weltering ranks ;
Their very graves are gone, and what are they ?
Thy tide wash'd down the blood of yesterday,
And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream
Glass'd, with its dancing light, the sunny ray ;
But o'er the blacken'd memory's blighting dream
Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.

52

The beauty of the scene melted even a heart like Harold's.

Thus Harold inly said, and pass'd along,
Yet not insensible to all which here
Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made even exile dear :
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness, which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe,
Joy was not always absent from his face,
But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

53

Byron is strongly reminded of his sister, Augusta.

Nor was all love shut from him, though his days
Of passion had consumed themselves to dust.
It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
On such as smile upon us ; the heart must
Leap kindly back to kindness, though disgust
Hath wean'd it from all worldlings : thus he felt,
For there was soft remembrance, and sweet trust
In one fond breast, to which his own would melt,
And in its tenderer hour on that his bosom dwelt.

54

Byron's attachment to children referred to.

And he had learn'd to love,—I know not why,
For this in such as him seems strange of mood,—
The helpless looks of blooming infancy,
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,
To change like this, a mind so far imbued
With scorn of man, it little boots to know;
But thus it was; and though in solitude
Small power the nipp'd affections have to grow,
In him this glow'd when all beside had ceased to glow.

55

His love for has sister Augusta, to whom he was tenderly attached.

And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure, and, far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities
Still undivided, and cemented more
By peril, dreaded most in female eyes ;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour !

1

This and the following three stanzas consist of a song. The poem here attributed to Childe Harold was written by Byron to his sister, Augusta when he was on the banks of the Rhine. Henceforth the character of Childe Harold disappears until near the end of Canto 4 where he says farewell.

THE castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine,
And hills all rich with blossom'd trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scatter'd cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strew'd a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert thou with me.

2

And peasant girls, with deep blue eyes,
And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this paradise;
Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through green leaves lift their walls of gray;
And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
Look o'er this vale of vintage-bowers;
But one thing want these banks of Rhine,—
Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine !

3

I send the lilies given to me;
Though long before thy hand they touch,
I know that they must wither'd be,
But yet reject them not as such;
For I have cherish'd them as dear,
Because they yet may meet thine eye,
And guide thy soul to mine even here,
When thou behold'st them drooping nigh,
And know'st them gather'd by the Rhine!
And offer'd from my heart to thine!

4

The river nobly foams and flows,
The charm of this enchanted ground,
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round:
The haughtiest breast its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here;
Nor could on earth a spot be found
To nature and to me so dear,
Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine !

56

Byron visits the tomb of Marceau near Coblentz.

By Coblentz, on a rise of gentle ground,
There is a small and simple pyramid,
Crowning the summit of the verdant mound;
Beneath its base are heroes' ashes hid,
Our enemy's—but let not that forbid
Honour to Marceau ! o'er whose early tomb
Tears, big tears, gush'd from the rough soldier's lid,
Lamenting and yet envying such a doom,
Falling for France, whose rights he battled to resume .

57

The secret of Marceau's greatness and popularity.

Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career,—
His mourners were two hosts, his friends and foes;
And fitly may the stranger lingering here
Pray for his gallant spirit's bright repose;
For he was Freedom's champion, one of those,
The few in number, who had not o'erstept
The charter to chastise which she bestows
On such as wield her weapons; hé hád kept
The whiteness of his soul, and thus men o'er him wept.

58

Byron visits the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein.

Here Ehrenbreistein, with her shattered wall
Black with the miner's blast, upon her height
Yet shows of what she was, when shall and ball
Rebounding idly on her strength did light:
A tower of victory ! from whence the flight
Of baffled foes was watch'd along the plain :
But peace destroy'd what war could never blight,
And laid those proud roofs bare to Summer's rain—.
On which the rain shower for years had pour'd in vain.

59

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine ! How long delighted
The stranger fain would linger on his way !
Thine is a scene alike where souls united
Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;
And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

The poet now leaves the Rhine country to enter the mountains of Switzerland.

60

Adieu to thee again ! a vain adieu !
There can be no farewell to scene like thine;
The mind is colour'd by thy every hue;
And if reluctantly the eyes resign
Their cherish'd gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine !
'T is with the thankful heart of parting praise;
More mighty spots may rise, more glaring shine,
But none unite in one attaching maze
The brilliant, fair, and soft,—the glories of old days,

But he departs reluctantly, for never has he witnessed a scene so lovely and grand.

61

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between,
The wild rocks shaped as they had turrets been,
In mockery of man's art; and these withal
A race of faces happy as the scene,
Whose fertile bounties here extend to all,
Still springing o'er thy banks, though Empires near them fall.

This stanza sums up the main features of the Rhine scenery that the poet has been describing in detail in the foregoing stanzas.

62

Byron is now in view of the Swiss Alps.

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow !
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

63

He visits the battle-field of Morat before climbing the Alps.

But ere these matchless heights I dare to scan,
There is a spot should not be pass'd in vain,—
Morat ! the proud, the patriot field ! where man
May gaze on ghastly trophies of the slain,
Nor blush for those who conquer'd on that plain;
Here Burgundy bequeath'd his tombless host,
A bony heap, through ages to remain,
Themselves their monument ;—the Stygian coast
Unsepulchred they roam'd and shriek'd each wandering ghost,

64

Byron's tribute to the battle of Morat.

While Waterloo with Connæ's carnage vies,
Morat and Marathon twin names shall stand;
They were true Glory's stainless victories,
Won by the unambitious heart and hand
Of a proud, brotherly, and civic band,
All unbought champions in no princely cause
Of vice-entail'd Corruption ; they no land
Doom'd to bewail the blasphemy of laws
Marking kings' rights divine, by some Draconic clause.

65

By a lone wall a lonelier column rears
A gray and grief-worn aspect of old days ;
'Tis the last remnant of the wreck of years,
And looks as with the wild-bewilder'd gaze
Of one to stone converted by amaze,
Yet still with consciousness ; and there it stands
Making a marvel that it not decays,
When the coeval pride of human hands,
Levell'd Aventicum, hath strew'd her subject lands.

Byron visits the column erected to the memory of Julia Alpinula, a Helvetian princess, who died to save her father's life.

66

And there—oh ! sweet and sacred be the name !—
Julia—the daughter, the devoted—gave
Her youth to heaven ; her heart, beneath a claim
Nearest to Heaven's, broke o'er a father's grave.
Justice is sworn 'gainst tears, and hers, would crave
The life she lived in ; but the judge was just,
And then she died on him she could not save.
Their tomb was simple and without a bust,
And held within their urn one mind, one heart, one dust

It was an act of noble self-sacrifice which should ever be honoured.

67

It is a deed of genuine gold, and of imperishable worth.

But these are deeds which should not pass away,
And names that must not wither, though the earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved, their death and birth;
The high, the mountain-majesty of worth
Should be, and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality look forth
In the sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,
Imperishably pure beyond all things below.

68

A decription of Lake Leman, in Switzerland.

Lake Leman woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue;
There is too much of man here, to look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish'd than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold.

69

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind:
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

The poet expresses a wish to live aloof from society, not because he hates mankind but only because he wishes to avoid them.

70

There, in a moment we may plunge out years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own soul turn all our blood to tears,
And colour things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea
The boldest steer but where their ports invite;
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity
Whose bark driven on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be.

For in society one moment of error may bring on life-long repentance.

71

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhoné,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake;—
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear?

Is it not better therefore to live apart from man and in the society of Nature ?

72

Byron's pantheistic creed.

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

73

Byron's sympathy with Nature and antipathy to man.

And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some sin, to sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

74

Byron defines pure existence, a state of the soul when it is free from the trammels of the body.

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm ?
The bodiless thought ? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot ?

75

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them ?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion ? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these ? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turn'd below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow ?

Nature is one with Byron, and Byron is one with Nature.

76

But this is not my theme ; and I return
To that which is immediate, and require
Those who find contemplation in the urn,
To look on One, whose dust was once all fire,
A native of the land where I respire
The clear air for a while—a passing guest,
Where he became a being,—whose desire
Was to be glorious ; 't was a foolish quest,
The which to gain and keep, he sacrificed all rest.

Byron leaves off his digression and turns to the subject in hand.

77

Byron's estimate of the character of Rousseau.

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over passion, and from woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched ; yet he knew
How to make madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they past
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

78

Rousseau's love was for ideal beauty.

His love was passion's essence :—as a tree
On fire by lightning, with ethereal flame
Kindled he was, and blasted ; for to be
Thus, and enamour'd, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame,
Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
But of ideal beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distemper'd though it seems.

79

This breathed itself to life in Julie, *this*
Invested her with all that's wild and sweet ;
This hallow'd, too, the memorable kiss
Which every morn his fever'd lip would greet,
From hers, who but with friendship his would meet ;
But to that gentle touch through brain and breast
Flash'd the thrill'd spirit's love-devouring heat :
In that absorbing sigh perchance more blest
Than vulgar mind may be with all they seek possest.

Rousseau's ideal love was represented in the character of Julie.

80

His life was one long war with self-souhgt foes,
Or friends by him self-banish'd for his mind
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose,
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind.
But he was phrensied,—wherefore, who may know ?
Since cause might be which skill could never find ;
But he was phrensied by disease or woe,
To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show.

Rousseau's suspiciousness was caused by a madness which was unaccountable.

81

Rousseau's influence in bringing about the French Revolution.

For then he was inspired, and from him came,
As from the Pythian's mystic cave of yore,
Those oracles which set the world in flame,
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more:
Did he not this for France? which lay before
Bow'd to the inborn tyranny of years?
Broken and trembling to the yoke she bore,
Till by the voice of him and his compeers
Roused up to too much wrath, which follows o'er-grown fears?

82

Byron's criticism of the French Revolution.

They made themselves a fearful monument!
The wreck of old opinions—things which grew,
Breathed from the birth of time: the veil they rent,
And what behind it lay, all earth shall view.
But good with ill they also overthrew,
Leaving but ruins, wherewith to rebuild
Upon the same foundation, and renew
Dungeons and thrones, which the same hour refill'd,
As heretofore, because ambition was self-will'd.

83

This stanza attempts to account for the Reign of Terror.

But this will not endure, nor be endured!
Mankind have felt their strength, and made it felt.
They might have used it better, but allured
By their new vigour, sternly have they dealt
On one another; pity ceased to melt
With her once natural charities. But they,
Who in oppression's darkness caved had dwelt,
They were not eagles, nourish'd with the day;
What marvel then, at times, if they mistook their prey?

84

What deep wounds ever closed without a scar?
The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear
That which disfigures it : and they who war
With their own hopes, and have been vanquish'd, bear
Silence, but not submission ; in his lair
Fix'd Passion holds his breath, until the hour
Which shall atone for years ; none need despair ;
It came, it cometh, and will come,—the power
To punish or forgive—in *one* we shall be slower.

This stanza describes what Byron thought to be the future results of the French Revolution.

85

Clear, placid Leman ! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction : once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

Byron visits Lake Leman and is profoundly impressed with its peaceful calm.

86

This stanza describes a boating excursion on the Lake.

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darken'd Jura, whose capt heights appear
Precipitously steep ; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood ; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more ;

87

Description of the evening twilight.

He is an evening reveller, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill ;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for starlight dews
All silently their tears of love instil,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
Deep into nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

88

The fancied relationship between stars and human destiny.

Ye starts ! which are the poetry of heaven !
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'t is to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you ; for ye are
A beauty and mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

89

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep :—
All heaven and earth are still : From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd Jake and mountain-coast
All is concenter'd in a life instense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

All nature is instinct with iife.

90

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solilude, where we are *least* alone ;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self : it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty ;—'t would disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

The sense of harmony which fills the mind amidst peaceful surroundings is the ultimate source of all the beauty we perceive with the eye.

91

God is best worshipped in the open air amidst scenes of Nature.

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places, and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,
Uprear'd of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy pray'r !

92

Description of thunder storm

The sky is changed !—and such a change ! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman ! Far along
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder ! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud !

93

The same continued.

And this is in the night :—Most glorious night !
Thou wert not sent for slumber ! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee !
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 't is black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

94

The twin hills of the Rhone Valley.

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted ;
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed :
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to wage.

95

The description of the storm resumed; the lightning flashes darting to and fro.

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand :
For here not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunderbolts from hand to hand.
Flashing and cast around : of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills path fork'd
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation work'd,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk'd.

96

The poet compares the storm to the storm in his own breast.

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye !
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful ; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, O tempests ! is the goal ?
Are ye like those within the human breast ?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest ?

97

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak ;
But as it is, I live and due unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

The atmospheric disturbance has created a disturbance in his own mind, and given rise to wild thoughts and feelings, which, for their very wildness, he is unable to express.

98

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with check all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb,—
And glowing into day : we may resume
The march of our existence : and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman ! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by
Much, that may give us pause, if ponder'd fittingly.

A bright morning succeeds the stormy night.

99

Byron visits the village of Clarens, every spot of which is associated with Love.

Clarens ! sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep Love !
Thine air is the young breath of passionate thought ;
Thy trees take root in Love ; the snows above
The very Glaciers have his colours caught,
And sunset into rose-hues see them wrought
By rays which sleep there lovingly : the rocks,
The permanent crags, tell here of Love who sought
In them a refuge from the worldly shocks,
Which stir and sting the soul with hope that woos, then mocks.

100

The god of Love has his kingly seat in Clarens.

Clarens ! by heavenly feet thy path are trod,—
Undying Love's, who here ascends a throne
To which the steps are mountains ; where the god
Is a pervading life and light,—so shown
Not on those summits solely, nor alone
In the still cave and forest : o'er the flower
His eye is sparkling, and his breath hath blown,
His soft and summer breath, whose tender power
Passes the strength of storms in their most desolate hour.

101

All things are here of *him* ; from the black pines,
Which are his shade on high, and the loud roar
Of torrents, where he listeneth, to the vines
Which slope his green path downward to the shore,
Where the bow'd waters meet him, and adore,
Kissing his feet with murmurs ; and the wood,
The covert of old trees, with trunks all hoar,
But light leaves, young as joy, stands where it stood,
Offering to him, and his a populous solitude.

Every sight and sound of Clarens ministers to love.

102

A populous solitude of bees and birds,
And fairy-form'd and many-colour'd things,
Who worship him with notes more sweet than words,
And innocently open their glad wings,
Fearless and full of life : the gush of springs,
And fall of lofty fountains, and the bend
Of stirring branches, and the bud which brings
The swiftest thought of beauty, here extend,
Mingling, and made by Love, unto one mighty end.

This stanza proceeds to explain " populous solitude " of the last.

103

The nature of Love.

He who hath loved not, here would learn that lore,
And make his heart a spirit ; he who knows
That tender mystery, will love the more ;
For this is Love's recess, where vain men's woes,
And the world's waste, have driven him far from those,
For 't is his nature to advance or die ;
He stands not still, but or decays, or grows
Into a boundless blessing, which may vie
With the immortal lights, in its eternity !

104

It was the scene of Rousseau's own ideal love.

'T was not for fiction close Rousseau this spot,
Peopling it with affections ; but he found
It was the scene which Passion must allot
To the mind's purified beings ; 't was the ground
Where early Love his Psyche's zone unbound,
And hallow'd it with loveliness : 't is lone,
And wonderful, and deep, and hath a sound,
And sense, and sight of sweetness ; here the Rhone
Hath spread himself a couch, the Alps have rear'd throne.

105

Lausanne ! and Ferney ! ye have been the abodes
Of names which unto you bequeath'd a name;
Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,
A path to perpetuity of fame :
They were gigantic minds, and their steep aim
Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile
Thoughts which should call down thunder, and the flame
Of Heaven again assail'd, if Heaven the while
On man and man's research could deign do more than smile.

Byron visits Lausanne and Ferney, places associated with the immortal spirits of Gibbon and Voltaire respectively

106

The one was fire and fickleness, a child
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind
A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined ;
He multiplied himself among mankind,
The Proteus of their talents : But his own
Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,—
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

Byron's estimate of the character of Voltaire

107

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;
The lord of irony,—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doom'd him to the zealot's ready Hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

Byron's estimate of the character of Gibbon.

108

Both were denounced for their agnosticism, but it is not for man to pass judgment on his fellow-men.

Yet, peace be with their ashes,—for by them,
If merited, the penalty is paid ;
It is not ours to judge,—far less condemn ;
The hour must come when such things shall be made
Known unto all, or hope and dread allay'd
By slumber, on one pillow, in the dust,
Which, thus much we are sure, must lie decay'd ;
And when it shall revive, as is our trust,
'T will be to be forgiven, or suffer what is just.

109

The poet returns to his favourite Nature

But let me quit man's works again to read
His Maker's, spread around me, and suspend
This page, which from my reveries I feed,
Until it seems prolonging without end.
The clouds above me to the white Alps tend,
And I must pierce them and survey whate'er
May be permitted, as my steps I bend
To their most great and growing region, where
The earth to her embrace compels the powers of air.

110

Reflections on Italy.

Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee,
Full flashes on the soul the light of ages,
Since the fierce Carthaginan almost won thee,
To the last halo of the chiefs and sages
Who glorify thy consecrated pages ;
Thou wert the throne and grave af empires ; still,
The fount ot which the panting mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill,
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill.

111

Thus far have I proceeded in a theme
Renew'd with no kind auspices:—to feel
We are not what we have been, and to deem
We are not what we should be, and to steel
The heart against itself; and to conceal,
With a proud caution, love, or hate, or aught,—
Passion or feeling, purpose, grief, or zeal,—
Which is the tyrant spirit of our thought,
Is a stern task of soul:—No matter,—it is taught.

The poet's mental gloom returns as he approaches the end of his song.

112

And for these words, thus woven into song,
It may be that they are a harmless wile,—
The colouring of the scenes which fleet along,
Which I would seize, in passing, to beguile
My breast or that of others, for a while.
Fame is the thirst of youth, but I am not
So young as to regard men's frown or smile,
As loss or guerdon of a glorious lot;
I stood and stand alone,—remember'd or forgot.

Byron pretends that he wrote this Poem for his own amusement, not for fame.

113

I have not loved the world nor the world me;
I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee,
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles, nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind, which thus itself subdued.

He pretends that he has always lived in isolation from society.

He admits that the world is not altogether so base and mean as he thinks, though he cannot say so from his own experience.

114

I have not loved the world, nor the world me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things, hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing; I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

Byron's thoughts return to his daughter.

115

My daughter ! with thy name this song begun;
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end;
I see thee not, I hear thee not, but none
Can be so wrapt in thee ; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart, when mine is cold,
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

116

To aid the mind's development, to watch
Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see
Almost thy very growth, to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me ;
Yet this was in my nature : as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

He regrets that it has not been his destiny to be a father to his daughter.

117

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me ; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim :
Though the grave closed between us,—'t were the same,
I know thou wilt love me ; though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou wouldst love me, still that more than life retain.

He hopes that she will love him.

118

The child of love, though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in convulsion. Of thy sire
These were the elements, and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee, but thy fire
Shall be more temper'd, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers ! O'er the sea
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me.

The poet concludes with a blessing on his daughter

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE
CANTO THE THIRD
NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

Introductory Remark

Canto III was really written when Byron was travelling in Switzerland, but the poet here goes back in imagination to the time when he left England.

The following circumstances of his life should be borne in mind to understand the earlier stanzas of the poem:—

The first two Cantos of *Childe Harold* were published in February 1812, and were most warmly received by the reading public of England. Early in 1815 Byron married, but the marriage was somehow an unhappy one. At the end of a year, a daughter, Ada, was born to him; but soon after, there was a separation between Byron and his wife. There were large numbers of people whom Byron had offended—the authors he had satirized, the gentlemen who did not like his peculiar habits and arrogant manners, as well as those who disapproved of his political and religious views; and they were exceedingly provoked by his desertion of his wife. Byron soon found himself out of favour with society altogether; and sought to divert his thoughts by another tour on the continent.

1

1. **Is thy face like thy mother's?**—Byron had seen his daughter (see line 3). So what he means to say here is—'If thy face *be* like thy mother's I cannot love thee so well as I am instinctively inclined to do; for thy mother's face is painfully associated in my mind just now.' This was written shortly after the separation from his wife.

2. **House**—family. **Heart**—affections. **Sole daughter of my house and heart**—my only child and the only one I love.

3. **Last**—on the least occasion, *i.e.*, shortly after thy birth.

Young blue eyes—little face.

4. **Not as now we part**—not for ever, but only temporarily.

5. **A hope**—*viz.*, the hope of meeting again.

N.B.—The dash, and the interrupted construction show that the poet passes on to another subject in the next line.

Awaking with a start—suddenly roused from sleep I find that, etc.

N.B.—The participle 'awaking' does not refer to 'waters' but to 'I' implied in *me*. Notice the loose grammar. The construction is—'Awaking with a start I find that the waters heave around me.'

6. **The waters**—*i.e.*, of the sea. **Heave**—are rising in waves. **Arouud me**—on all sides of my ship.

7. **Lift up their voices**—are blowing in loud guests.

8. **Whither I know not**—without any destination.

The hour's gone by—that time is past.

9. **Albion**—the old name of England. **Lessening**—appearing smaller and smaller to view as the ship sails further and further away the harbour.

Explanation.—*I depart wither I know not......mine eye.*—I am leaving home without any destination—bound on an aimless voyage. But I am not sorry to leave home, for I have ceased to feel any love for my native land that could cause me a pang at the moment of parting.

2

10. **Once more upon the waters**—I am once again proceeding on a voyage. **Yet**—still.

11. **Bound**—leap. **As a steed that knows his rider**—like a horse who gallops joyfully when he feels his master on his back.

Byron knew and loved the sea as much as a man knows and loves his favourite horse.

12. **Welcome to their roar**—the sound of the waves is most delightful to me.

13. **Swift be their guidance**—may they carry me quickly. **Wheresoever they lead**—whither they like. He has no fixed destination to go to, and he pretends to throws himself on the mercy of the winds and waves.

14. **Strained**—bent by force of the wind. **Quiver as a reed**—shake violently.

15. **Rent canvas**—sails tons to pieces by the fury of the wind. **Strew the gale**—be blown away on all sides by the wind.

Ll. 14-15—'whatever the fury of the wind and whatever the violence of the waves may be.' That is, 'I shall not be deterred from going by any storm happening at sea, however severe.'

16. **Still must I on**—even then, I cannot help proceeding onwards. Notice the omission of the verb of motion, as we frequently find in Shakespeare. **Weed**—sea-weed.

17. **Flung**—torn. **I am as a weed flung from the rock**—I am a worthless man driven out from home and obliged to flee away to distant countries.

18. **Where'er the sure......prevail**—in whatever direction the winds and waves may carry me.

3

19. **Youth summer**—the earliest, happiest years of youth. **I did sing of one**—The reference is to the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, published in February 1812, when Byron was 24 years of age—"youth's summer". The 'one' here refers to Childe Harold—the fictitious name Byron had himself adopted in this poem.

20. **The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind**— This is Childe Harold, an imaginary personage with whom Byron has identified himself throughout this poem. The meaning is—'one who was obliged to undergo voluntary exile to escape from his own evil thoughts'.

21. **Seize the theme**—resume the subject. **Then but begun**—which I had then only commenced but left unfinished.

22. **Bear it with theme**—continue it ; proceed with the subject. As **the rushing wind bears the cloud onwards**—*i.e.*, as a mere accompaniment to my thoughts, not as a subject by itself.

23. **That Tale**—*viz.*, the subject of Harold's fortunes.

24. **Furrow**—*i.e.*, traces. **Long thought**—thoughts long past. **Dried-up tears**—past griefs.

25. **Ebbing**—as they are retreating ; *i. e.*, as they are in the course of being forgotten. **Sterile**—barren ; hence 'unprofitable.' Track—path ; *i.e.*, recollection.

26. **All**—quite ; very ;—an adverb. **Heavily**—sorrowfully. **Journeying**—as they pass on. **Years**—sc. of life.

27. **Plod**—travel laboriously. **The last sands**—the concluding years. Where **not a flower appers**—when all becomes sad and bitter without a single happy recollection of the past.

Explanation.—*In that Tale I find the furrows of long thought.........appears.*—As I resume the subject of Harold's fortunes, I find in it traces of thoughts long past and griefs long vanished, faint recollections of which always continue to embitter one's life to the last.

The metaphor is taken from a torrent-bed, which when dried up serves for a sandy or pebbly path (a "sterile track"), as is often the case in the Himalayan regions. Thought is here compared to a mountain torrent cutting a channel (or "furrow") in which tears ran. When the stream of tears dried up, the channel became a shingly path along which the years of a

man's life are spoken of as travelling wearily to their destination.

4

28. **My young days of passion** —my youth when my nature was strongly emotional. **Joy or pain**—whether the emotions were of a pleasurable or painful character.

29. **Perchance**—perhaps. **Heart**—feelings. **Harp**—my verse. **Lost a string**—*i. e.*, deteriorated.

30. **Jar**—lit 'produce harsh music' ; hence, 'produce an unpleasant effect '.

Byron is here speaking modestly of himself. He says he is perhaps incapable of experiencing such noble feeling and of writing such good poetry as he did in his earlier years. Perhaps both his feelings and his verse have deteriorated in quality. As a matter of fact, however, Cantos III and IV. are distinctly superior to the earlier ones, though only six years intervened between the production of the two.

31. **Would**—wish to. Essay—attempt ;—a verb. **To sing**—This is to be taken with 'essay.' **It may be, that in vain I would essay......sing**—perhaps my attempt now to write as good poetry as I did before will be vain ; perhaps it is impossible for me now to compose verse of as good a quality as I did in my "young days of passion."

Byron was only 30 years old when the third canto was written, and yet he pretends that he has grown old and therefore incapable of producing as good poetry as six years before.

32. **Though**—even if it is. **Dreary strain**—melancholy subject ; uninteresting topic. **Cling**—stick ; adhere. He wishes to persist in singing on the same melancholy theme in order to drown his gloomy thoughts.

33. **So that**—provided. **Wean me from**—*i. e.*, lead me to renounce. **Weary dream**—tiresome and vain thoughts.

34. **Selfish grief or gladness**—my personal joys or

sorrows. **So it fling forgetfulness around me**—provided it causes me to forget the wicked past.

36. **A not ungrateful theme**—a welcome subject.

5

37. **He**—that man. Used generically. **Aged**—old.

38. **In deeds, not years**—in activity thought not in age. **Piercing the depths of life**—having experience of every phase of life, even the worst ; having experience of the profoundest mysteries pertaining to human life.

39. **So that no wonder waits him**—so that nothing causes him surprise everything that happens comes to him as a matter of coarse.

N.B.—This is the Stoic doctrine of *Nil admirari*, to be surprised at nothing.

Below—in this world.

40. **Fame**—desire for fame. **Strife**—competition.

41. **Cut to his heart**—affect his feelings painfully. **Keen knife**—acute suffering.

42. **Silent**—without murmur; speechless. **Sharp endurance**—bearing great agony unmurmuringly. **He**— such a man.

43. **Thought** —*i. e.*, a thoughtful man. Abstract for concrete. **Seeks refuge**—takes shelter form the turmoils of the world. **Lone caves yet rife with airy images**— retired spots which though solitary are yet full of creatures of the imagination.

44. **Shapes**—conceptions; mental images. **Dwell**—live.

45. **Still unimpaired**—as fresh as ever. **Old**—familiar. **Dwell in the soul's haunted cell**—persist in living in the mind.

Explanation: **Stanza 5**—A man who may be considered

old by virtue of experience—no matter what his age is; who has known every phase of human life so thoroughly that he takes everything that happens as a matter of course; and who has ceased to be painfully affected by desire of fame, or worldly aspirations, or mutual jealousies; such a man is in a position to explain why thoughtful men withdraw themselves from the turmoils of the world into retired spots which, though solitary, are yet filled with creatures of the imagination. These mental images or conception though familiar do yet appear as fresh as ever, and continue to haunt the mind even in solitude with the same persistency as before.

6

46. **To create**—to originate new thoughts and feelings. **In creating**—in giving birth to original conceptions—conceptions that appear so real as to look lifelike.

47. **Being**—life. **Intense**—fervid; real. **Endow with form**—invest with reality; *i.e.*, put into words.

48. **Fancy**—conception; what we imagine. **Gaining**—gaining life; *i.e.*, deriving a keener sense of life.

As we give the life we image—in the very act of our giving reality to out conceptions. **Even as I do now**—in the same way as I have conceived the character of Childe Harold.

Explanation.—*'Tis to create and in creating live a being more intense......now*—It is with a view to originating new thoughts and feeling, and living a more fervid life thereby, that we invest out conceptions with reality and put them into words; so that in the very act of our giving reality to them we derive a keener sense of life ourselves.

50. **Nothing**—a nonentity. **Not so**—*i. e.*, a reality. **Thou**—*viz.*, the imaginary personage Childe Harold I have conceived.

51. **Soul of my thought**—my living conception. **With whom**—lit. 'in whose company'; hence "identified with which."(T.)

52. **Invisible but gazing**—observing all things though unobserved myself. **Glow**—am filled with emotion.

53. **Mixed with thy spirit**—becoming part of you; identified with you. **Blended with**—partaking of. **Birth**—nature.

54. **Feeling still with thee**—sharing your emotions; *i.e.*, being in perfect sympathy with the scenes visited by the imaginary Childe Harold. **In my crushed feelings' dearth**—in my present heart-broken state when I am incapable of any emotion.

Explanation—*What am I ? Nothing : but not so art thou......dearth.*—In this state the sense of my own nothingness gives way to the consciousness that my conception is real. I identify myself with this imaginary personage conceived by me, and am thus able to survey the world, observing all things though unobserved myself. I can thus partake of his nature and share his emotions even in this heart-broken state when I am otherwise incapable of any emotion.

7

55. **Yet**—though I cannot help indulging in loose fancies of this kind, yet, &c. **Must I think less wildly**—I must become more sober in my thoughts.

56. **Darkly**—gloomily.

57. **Eddy.**—confused state ; lit. 'whirlpool'. **Boiling**—greatly excited. **O'erwrought**—too deeply stirred.

58. **Whirling gulf**—a confused mass. **Phantasy and flame**—fierce fancies ; Fig Hendiadys.

59. **Untaught in youth my heart to tame**—because in early life I had never learnt to control my passion.

60. **Spring of life**—the very source of life (compared here to a stream) ; *i.e.*, my character in earliest life. **Poisoned**—corrupted. **Too late**—sc. to mend my character.

61. **Yet am I changed**—although it is too late totally to remedy the faults produced in my character by bad bringing-up, yet advancing years have made some difference in me.

62. **Strength**—fortitude. **Bear what time cannot abate**—endure what cannot be cured.

Note.—Cf. the proverb—What cannot be cured must be endured. !

63. **Feed on bitter fruits**—bear the evil consequences of my own folly. **Without accusing fate**—*i.e.*, cheerfully; without murmuring.

Explanation—Stanza 7. But I should not indulge in loose fancies of this kind. The fact is that I have been in the habit of brooding over such thoughts so long and gloomily that my brain, already confused, grew worse confounded, till it became a confused mass of fierce fancies. And thus it was that, having never learnt to control my passions in early life, my character became corrupted from the very beginning. It is too late to mend now. Nevertheless advancing years made a difference in me, though a sufficient degree of my former fortitude remains to enable me to endure what cannot be cured and to bear the evil consequences of my own folly without murmuring.

8

64. **Something too much of this**—I have indulged enough in this kind of talk; let me speak no more of myself.

The phrase (which has now become proverbial) is taken from *Hamlet*, III. ii 69.

65. **The spell closes with its silent seal**—my morbid egotistical tale is ended. 'Silent seal'='seal of silence.' The metaphor is taken from a magician's book fastened with a spell acting as a seal.

66. **Long absent Harold**—Childe Harold, or Byron himself in that disguise, has not been before the public for

some time. The earlier cantos had appeared in February 1812.

Reappears—comes once more before the public.

67. **He of the breast......feel**—Childe Harold who wished to attain to a state of total insenibility to joy or sorrow.

68 **Wrung**—tortured. **The wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal**—pangs which though they do not cause death are yet incurable ; *viz.*, the pain of remorse.

70. **Soul**—mind ; character. **Aspect**—looks ; personal appearance, **Years**—advancing age ; lapse of time. **Steal** —imperceptibly take aways.

71. **Fire**—energy. **As**—just as they steal. **Vigour from the limb**—strength from the body.

72. **Life's enchanted cup**—the bewitching pleasures and enjoyments of life. **But sparkles near the brim**—appears attractive only at the surface ; charms us only outwardly.

Explanation.—*Years steal fire from the mind......brim*— As we grow older and older we find both our mental energy and our physical strength declining by imperceptible degrees, so that those pleasures which used to charm us in youth come to lose all their fascination.

Note—Pleasure is here compared to champagne, a wine which causes a bright effervescence at the top of the glass. when poured out. The sight of it is very attractive to those who drink it for the first time ; but its after-effects are as bad as those of any other wine.

73. **His**—his life's enchanted cup. **Quaffed**—drunk. **Too quickly**—with undue haste. **His had been quaffed too quickly**—Harold had in his youth indulged in all sorts of pleasures at a too fast rate.

74. **Dregs**—*i.e.*, after-effects. **Wormwood**—*i.e.*, exceedingly painful. Wormwood is a kind of poison very bitter tot he taste. **Filled**—sc. his cup. **He filled again**—he tried to enter on a new life of pleasure.

75. **Fount**—source. **On holier ground**—in a better country than England.

N.B.—The reference here is to his travels, especially in Greece. The source ("fount") from which he now sought to derive fresh pleasure was foreign travel, hence "purer" than social dissipations from which his earlier enjoyments were derived. "Holier ground" refers to Greece, where, according to Byron, the moral atmosphere was more elevated than that of England in his age.

Some editors take the line to allude to his marriage. But this is inconsistent with what he says in the next stanza:

"Such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand."

76. **Spring**—current. **Perpetual**—everlasting. That is, he thought the pleasure he derived from travel was lasting. **But in vain**—but these too were equally transitory.

77. **Round him clung a chain**—he left a drag upon his happiness. This was Remorse, hence 'invisibly.'

78. **Galled**—tormented him. **Fettering thought unseen**—putting a restraint upon his happiness-though causing no physical obstacle.

79. **Heavy**—oppressive. **Though it clanked not**—though it made no sound ; though it imposed no outward check. **Worn with pain**—painfully suffered.

80. **Pined**—wasted him ;—here used as a transitive verb. **Although it spoke not**—silently. **Grew keen**—became acute.

81. **Entering**—cutting him more and more deeply. **With every step he took**—as he travelled onward **Through many a scene**—through different countries.

The meaning of stanza is—I enjoyed the pleasures of life rather too fast—all in early youth ; and the consequence was that I found the after-effects most bitter. But tried to derive fresh pleasure from a fresh source (*viz.* foreign travel), in the hope that this joy would be lasting ;

but alas, I was disappointed again. Wherever I went, I was pursued by remorse which put a cruel restraint upon my enjoyments, and oppressed and tormented me, causing me more and more suffering as I travelled onward through different countries.

10

82. **Secure**—feeling safe (from the torments of remorse). **Guarded coldness**—an affected indifference or want of sympathy.

83. **Infancied safety**—falsely believing himself safe. **His kind**—society ; his fellow-men.

84. **Spirit**—character. **Firmly fixed**—stable, and so not liable to change.

85. **Sheathed with**—protected by. **Invulnerable mind**—strong reason, which could not be perturbed by anything like an impregnable fortress.

86. **That if no joy, no sorrow lurked behind**—that if he was destined to enjoy no pleasure, he was at least safe from pain.

87. **As one**—"as one of the multitude." **The many**—society.

88. **Unheeded**—unobserved. **Through the crowd**—*i.e.* in human nature.

89. **Fit speculation**—suitable subjects for thought. **Strange land**—foreign countries.

90. **Wonder-works of God &c.**—grand natural scenes.

The meaning is :—Byron assumed an attitude of indifference and apathy and supposed that this would keep him safe from the strings of remorse that follow indulgence in pleasure. He thought his character was now sufficiently stable and adequately guarded by strong reason for him to fear nothing from the society of men ; so that if he was destined to enjoy no happiness he had at least the satisfaction of being safe from pain. So he believed he was now in a

position to mix freely with his his fellow-men and pick out suitable subjects for the study of human nature, in the same way as he was studying the beauties of external nature.

11

91. **The ripened rose**—*i.e.*, an attractive pleasure. **Nor seek to wear it**—without being tempted to enjoy it.

That is, it is impossible to see an attractive pleasure without being tempted to enjoy it. Compare the couplet from *Yusuf—Zuleikha*.

چو یابد بوے گل خواهد که بیند * جو بیند روے گل خواهد که چیند

92. **Curiously**—by way of curiosity ; even for the sake of mere intellectual study.

93. **Sheen**—brightness. **Of beauty's cheek**—of a beautiful face.

94. **All**—entirely. **Old**—passionless.

That is, the heart is inevitably fired with passion even when we observe some beauty merely for the sake of intellectual study.

95. **Contemplate**—watch. **Unfold**—disclosing.

96. **Star**—*i.e.* rank and honour. **Steep**—hill.

Nor climb—without making an attempt to attain it. That is,—it is impossible to think of fame and greatness and honour, however surrounded the attainment of them may be with difficulties, without making an attempt to attain them.

N.B.—"The dlfficulty of reaching fame is represented by the steep mountain-peak, the goal of ambition by the star shining about it, the fluctuations of hope and despondency by the clouds now opening, now closing before it." (T.)

97. **Vortex**—whirlpool; *i.e.*, society, so called because of its giddy pleasures.

Rolled on with the giddy circle—took part in social gaieties and amusements just like other men.

98. **Chasing Time**—just to spend his days away.

99. **With a nobleraim**—with greater discrimination in the choice of pleasures ; or with a higher motive. **Fond**—foolish. **Prime**—early part.

12

101. **Herd**—associate ; used contemptuously. **With whome he held little in common**—*i.e.* he was altogether unlike other men.

102. **Untaught to submit his thoughts to others**—being always self-opinionated ; being too much of a free-thinker.

103. **His soul was quelled**—his spirit was crushed.

104. **His own thoughts**—the vehemence of his own passions. **Still uncompelled**—"being even now his own master." (T.)

105. **Yield dominion of his mind**—acknowledge the inferiority of his own thoughts and feelings.

106. **Spirit**—people. **Against whom his own rebelled**—whom he totally despised ; with whom he was not in sympathy.

107. **Proud though in desolation**—thinking highly of himself even when deserted by others.

N.B.—Compare Milton :

"Majestic though in ruin"

—*Paradise Lost II, 305.*

Which—*viz.* 'desolation' or loneliness.

108. **A life within itself**—enjoyments of its own. **Breathe without mankind**—live aloof from the society of man; live a solitary life.

13

109. **Where rose the mountains......friends**—*i.e.,* he found as much enjoyment amidst mountain scenery as he did in the company of his friends.

110. **Where rolled the ocean......home**—he was exceedingly fond of leading a sea-faring life. For Byron's love of the sea, compare stanza 2, Canto III. and stanza 179 of Canto IV.

111. **A blue sky**—*i.e.*, bright weather. **Glowing clime**—a country having a warm climate. **Extends**—spreads out.

N.B.—Byron was probably thinking of southern Europe, particularly Italy, when he spoke of 'blue sky' and 'glowing clime.'

112. **Passion**—strong desire. **Power**—means. **Roam**—travel through.

113. **Breaker's foam**—waves dashing on the shore.

114. **Were unto him companionship**—were his companions; *i.e.*, he loved to visit them and take delight in them.

115. **A mutual language**—a language understood by both parties; a speech as intelligible to him as his was to the powers of Nature.

Clearer—more intelligible. **Tome**—literature.

116. **His land's tongue**—the English language. **Forsake**—leave.

117. **For Nature's pages**—in order to study nature. **Glassed**—reflected. **The lake**—Prof. Tozer says that Byron was probably thinking of his own lake at Newstead. But this need not be so. It may be any lake, representing natural scenery in general.

Explanation.—*They spoke a mutual language clearer than the tome...lake.*—Harold communed with Nature in a speech as clear to him as his was to the powers of Nature. It was indeed more intelligible to him than works of English literature, which he sometimes left in order to look on natural scenery.

14

118. **The Chaldean**—the Chaldeans were an ancient

people, dwelling on the plains of the Euphrates and Tigris, who were held to have discovered the science of astronomy.

He could watch the stars—Harold—that is, Byron himself—could gaze at the stars as closely out of admiration as the Chaldeans used to do for their astronomical calculations.

119. **He had peopled them with beings &c.**—he imagined that they were inhabited by a race of supernatural beings. **Bright as their own beams**—beings as radiant as the stars themselves ; beings knowing only joy and no sorrow.

120. **Earth-born jars**—worldly turmoils.

121. **Human frailties**—the evils of life ; the weaknesses of men.

122. **Could he have kept...........flight**—if he could have confined his thoughts to the starry heavens ; if he had sustained his mind at that elevation.

123. **Had been**—would have been. **This clay**—man's earthly nature. **Sink**—drag down.

124. **Its spark immortal**—the soul. **Envying it the light to which it mounts**—as if out of jealousy for the spiritual heights to which it can ascend.

125. **Break the link**—cut off the bond—its connection with the body.

126. **Yon**—yonder. **Woos**—attracts. **Brink**—shores.

Explanation.—Stanza 14.—Harold was as fond of gazing at the stars as the ancient Chaldeans. In his imagination he saw them inhabited by a race of supernatural beings knowing only joy, not sorrow ; and while he gazed above he forgot the troubles and turmoils of the world. Well, if he had confined his thoughts to the contemplation of the starry heavens he would have been happy. But he was forced to descend to less lofty objects, for our gross earthly nature will, out of jealousy as it were, drag down the eternal

soul from the spiritual heights of thoughts to which it ascends, in a manner that shows as if it would burst the bondage which confines it to earth, and fly back to heaven to which it is attracted.

15

127. **In man's dwellings**—in the midst of society. **Thing**—creature ; used contemptuously.

128. **Worn**—wasted. **Stern**—obstinate. **Wearisome**—*i.e.*, fretful ;—used in a passive sense.

129. **Drooped**—"he lost his spirit." (T.) **Wildborn**—born in the woods. **With clipt wing**—whose wings are cut short to prevent him from flying.

130. **The boundless air**—the free air of the woods. **Were home**—would be a fit dwelling-place.

131. **His fit**—his wandering fit.

Note.—The expression is taken from *Macbeth*, III. iv 21—"Then comes my fit again."

132. **Barred-up**—caged.

133. **Wiry dome**—a fine poetic phrase for a 'cage.'

134. **Tinge his plumage**—stain his feathers. **Heat**—ardour,

135. **Impeded**—whose desires were suppressed. **Through his bosom eat**—consume him ; waste him away.

The simile may be explained thus :—Just as a falcon born in the woods, if shut up in a cage, would dash against the bars and fret itself to death, in the same way Harold, who had an inborn love for nature, had his faculties cramped in human society, till he found himself wasting away under the restraints that were imposed upon his heart.

N.B.—Notice the sudden change of construction after line 131 (Fig. *Anacoluthon*). The word 'as' in the beginning of l. 132 merely introduces the simile, and is correlated

'to 'so' in l. 134 : it is not to be read in connection with 'eagerly.'

16

136. **Self-exiled**—driven out of his home by his own impulsive nature. Cf. 'the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind.' (l. 20.)

137. **With nought of hope.........gloom**—in no cheerful mood but yet not gloomy.

138. **That he lived in vain**—that his life had all been wasted.

139. **That all was over on this side the tomb**—that the worst that cauld happen to him in life had already happened; or, that he had nothing else to live for.

140. **Made Despair a smilingness assume**—made me put on a look of gladness although I was despondent at heart.

141. **Which**—*viz.* this despair. **Wild**—reckless. **Plundered wreck**—a ship plundered and destroyed by pirates.

142. **Madly meet their doom**—desperately suffer death (by drowning.)

143. **With draughts intemperate**—by getting drunk. **Sinking deck**—foundering ship.

144. **Inspire a cheer**—produce a kind of comfort. **Forbore to check**—did not disturb.

NOTE—The simile of the 'plundered wreck' refers to a practice ascribed to the sailors of a sinking vessel, who intoxicate themselves with liquor to bear death more easily. The mood of despair in which Childe Harold set out on his 'pilgrimage' was akin to the despair of these sailors, in that though reckless it was yet capable of causing a temporary elevation of spirits.

17

From this stanza begins the famous description of Waterloo, one of the finest passages in Byron. Notice the

skill with which the poet turns the attention of the reader from following the morbid account of himslf that he has been giving, to the field of Waterloo.

145. **Stop!**—pause, visitor ! Notice the dramatic force of the word. **Thy tread is on an Empire's dust**—you are stepping upon holy ground, a grave,—the grave of an Empire, Waterloo, the spot where the French Empire under Napoleon came to ruin. (It is considered sacrilege to walk upon a grave.)

146. **An Earthquake's spoil**—all that was destroyed in that disastrous battle. **Sepulchred**—buried. **Below**—under the ground.

147. **The spot**—the battle-field. **Colossal**—enormous.

Byron pretends to feel surprised that no memorial, has been erected on the battle-field, for when Byron visited it (hardly a year after the battle) the mound with the Belgian lion, which now marks the spot, had not been erected.

148. **Column**—an obelisk. **Trophied**—decorated with memorials of the battle. **For triumphal show**—to commemorate the victory.

149. **But the moral's truth tells simpler so**—but the moral lesson taughs by Waterloo (*viz.* that is nothing in the world's history) is more impressive in its simplicity *without* a memorial.

150. **As the ground was......be**—Byron thinks that such a field requires no monument and should remain without a monument.

151. **Red rain**—immense bloodshed. **Hath made the harvest grow**—has made the soil productive. This is because blood, bones, etc., are excellent manure, and spots where there has been any bloodshed or slaughter are always the most fertile parts of the earth.

152. **This**—*viz*. a plentiful harvest.

153. **First and last**—supreme in importance. **King-making victory**—victory which resulted only in establishing kings more securely on their thrones. For the restoration

of Louis XVIII followed the fall of Napoleon, and the Emperors of Russia and Austria and the King of Prussia bound themselves together by the Holy Alliance with the object of mutual defence.

18

154. **This place of skulls**—the field of Waterloo, where there was an immense slaughter. The expression was suggested to Byron by the name Golgotha. the Hebrew name for the Hill of Calvary, the scene of the Crucifixon.

155. **The grave of France**—the spot where the French Empire met with its downfall.

156. **In an hour**—in a very brief space of time. **The power which gave**—*viz.*, Destiny. 'Gave' is here used intransitively. **Annuls**—takes away.

157. **Transferring**—giving to others. **As fleeting too**—which (fame) is as transitory as other material gifts of fortune.

Within a few hours Napoleon who was head of the mightiest empire in Europe, was reduced to a most humble position. This shows how quickly Fortune can desert one man and go to another.

158. **Pride of place**—a term of falconry, meaning the highest pitch of flight.

N.B.—The phrase is quoted from *Macbeth*, II iv, 12—
"A falcon tow' ring in her pride of place."

Last—for the last time. **The eagle**—here stands for Napoleon. The eagle is the emblem of France, and the imperial banner in Napoleon's day bore the figure of an eagle.

159. **Tore with bloody talon the rent plain**—made a desperate resistance.

Note.—This and the preceding line originally ran as

follows:—

"Here his last flight the haughty eagle flew,
Then tore with bloody beak fatal plain."

On seeing these lines, Reinagle (an artist) sketched a a fierce chained eagle tearing the earth with his *talons*. On hearing of this Byron wrote: 'Reinagle is a better poet and a better ornithologist than I am; eagles, and all birds of prey, attack with their *talons*, and not with their *beaks*, and I have altered the lines.'

160. **Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through**—when attacked by a formidable coalition. The 'banded nations' refers to the last coalition of European powers made against Napoleon, consisting of England, Prussia, Belgium and Holand.

161. **Ambition's life and labours**—Napoleon's efforts to rise to greatness.

162. **He wears the shattered......chain**—the chain with which he had bound the world in bondage to him has been broken, and is now used to bind him in return; *i.e.*, he tried to subjugate the other powers of the world, who combined against him and made him their captive.

19

163. **Fit retribution**—it was only proper that he should be wrongfully treated in return for the wrongs he committed. **Gaul**—France. **Champ the bit**—fret at the restraint imposed upon her.

The metaphor is taken from an unruly horse who has to be put under control by a tight bit, which he chews in rage.

164. **Foam in fetters**—rage violently at her humiliation. **Is earth more free?**—has Waterloo conferred a greater measure of freedom on the nations of the earth?

165. **Combat**—wage war. **One**—a single human being —Napoleon.

166. **League**—form a coalition. **To teach all kings true sovereignty**—in order to give a lesson to the kings of

all countries not to overstep the limits of monarchical powers.

That is, was the object of the coalition merely to crush Napoleon, or to teach the crowned heads of the world the true limits of monarchical power?

167. **What ?**—an exclamation of surprise. **Reviving**—to restore. **Thraldom**—despotic monarchy.

168. **Be the patched-up idol of enlightened days**—be set up and worshipped by us even in this age of enlightenment ushered in by the French Revolution.

That is, after overthrowing the despotism of Napoleon, shall we re-establish the same form of Government by setting up Louis XVIII in his place? If we do so, the liberty and equality won for us by the French Revolution will be all to no purpose.

169. **Struck down**—overthrew. **The Lion**—Napoleon.

170. **The Wolf**—a lesser king, Louis XVIII. **Pay homage**—acknowledge the rule of. **Proffering lowly gaze**—looking with submissive eyes upon.

171. **And servile knees**—and humbly kneeling down before. **Thrones**—*i.e.*, despotic monarchs. **Prove before ye praise**—before congratulating yourselves on the victory at Waterloo, determine whether it has really brought good to mankind.

20

172. **If not**—if Waterloo has not effected the deliverance of humanity from the bonds of tyranny. **One fallen despot**—the overthrow of a single tyrant, Napoleon.

173. **Fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears**—women wept bitterly.

Compare—

'The furrows of long thought and dried-up tears.' (1.24.)

174. **For**—for the death of. **Europe's flowers**—the

best soldiers of Europe. **Long**—for many years. **Rooted up**—killed. **Before**—*i.e.*, in wars against.

175. **The trampler of her vineyards**—Napoleon who was devastating the whole of Europe.

176. **Death**—the slaughter of war. **Depopulation**—reducing the population of towns and cities. **Bondage**—slavery.

N. B.—The reference in the above lines is to the desolation caused by Bonaparte's campaigns.

177. **Broken**—terminated. **Accord**—unanimity, *i.e.*, coalition.

178. **Roused up millions**—the nations of Europe stirred up to resist the tyranny of Napoleon. **Endears glory**—makes military glory worth attaining.

179. **The myrtle**—the symbol of peace.

180. **Harmodious**—Harmodius was an Athenian patriot who with his brother Aristogeiton murdered Hipparchus, the Tyrant of Athens, in B.C. 514, with daggers concealed in myrtle branches. Harmodius and Aristogeiton were thenceforward celebrated in Greek tradition and song as the assertors of Athenian liberty.

Explanation. Stanza 20.—If Waterloo has not effected the deliverance of humanity from the bonds of tyranny, we have no reason to congratulate ourselves on the overthrow of Napoleon ; and the tyranny and misery so patiently endured by the subject nations, the bloodshed and desolation that continued for so many years of combined struggle against that tyranny, have all been to no purpose. For the true glory of war is when the death of a tyrant is followed by the total abolition of tyranny.

21

The poet here proceeds to describe the eve of the battle of Quatre Bras, fought on June 16th, two days before Waterloo. On the night of the 15th the Duchess of Richmond, an English visitor, gave a ball at Brussels. The entertainment

was interrupted by the sound of the approaching artillery of the enemy. By Wellington's orders the British generals left the ball-room at about 10 o'clock and proceeded to join their respective troops on their way to Quatre Bras. Wellington himself stayed on till supper.

181. **A sound of revelry**—a' sound of merry-making, *i.e.*, of a ball.

Note.—Instead of saying a 'ball' the poet says 'a sound of revelry' in order to contrast it with that other 'sound' which interrupted the entertainment.

182. **Belgium's capital**—Brussels.

183. **Beauty**—ladies; "fair women" (1. 184). **Chivalry**—gentlemen; "brave men" (1. 184). Both words are abstract for concerete.

185. **A thousand hearts beat happily**—all assembled there enjoyed the entertainment immensely.

186. **Voluptuous swell**—passion-inspiring notes.

187. **Soft eyes**—tender looks. **Looked love**—gazed lovingly. **Spake again**—looked back as tenderly.

188. **And all went merry as a marriage bell**—and there was universal rejoicing as at a marriage.

189. **A deep sound**—the sound of distant guns. **Strikes**—sc. upon the ear. **Rising**—just beginning to be heard. **Knell**—the tolling of bells at a funeral; hence 'an ominous sound'; a death-note.

22

190. **Did ye not hear it?**—Some one in the room was heard to whisper this to another.

191. **The car**—a carriage.

192. **On with the dance**—let the dance continue. **Unconfined**—boundless.

193. **No sleep**—let there be no sleep.

N.B.—The omission of the verb in both phrases 'On with the dance' and no sleep' expresses excitement.

Youth and pleasure—young men and women enjoying the pleasures of a dance.

194. **Chase**—spend; the word suggests rapidity. **Glowing hours**—hours of heedless mirth. **Flying feet**—a dance.

195. **Heavy**—deep; or ominous. **Breaks in**—interrupts the entertainment.

196. **As if the clouds its echo would repeat**—" as if it were the rumbling of a thunderstorm."

197. **Nearer, clearer, deadlier**—A fine example of climax.

198. **Arm ! Arm ;**—prepare instantly for battle.

N.B.—The double repetition serves to denote excitement and alarm.

Opening—commencing

23

199. **Windowed niche**—a bay window. 'Niche' properly means 'a recess for a statue.' **That high hall**—sc. where the ball was held.

200. **Sath**—the old form of 'sat'. **Brunswick's fated chieftain**—Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick. 'Fated' because he was destined to die at the battle of Quatre Bras next day.

201. **Festival**—gay gathering.

202. **Caught its tone**—distinguished the sound as that of guns. **With death's prophetic ear**—in ominous warning of his own approaching death. The phrase alludes to the widespread belief that men sometimes receive warnings of coming death, especially in battle.

203. **They**—those who were not so alarmed at the sound.

204. **More truly**—sc. than those who smiled. **Peal**—thundering sound; the roar of cannon.

Too well—painfully well—because it was associated with his father's death.

205. **Stretched his father on a bloody bier**—caused the death of his father in battle. His father was killed at the battle of Jena, 1806.

206. **Roused the vengeance**—filled him with the desire for vengeance. **Blood alone could quell**—which would not be satisfied till one or the other (the young Duke or the slayer of his father) was dead.

N.B.—'The vengeance blood alone could quell' may be paraphrased into 'mortal vengeance.'

207. **Foremost fighting fell**—died fighting in the front ranks of the army.

24

208. **Hurrying to and fro**—men running hither and thither in haste.

209. **Gathering tears**—ladies on the point of weeping. **Tremblings of distress**—women quaking pitifully with fear.

210. **Cheeks**—sc. of the ladies. **All pale**—sc. with fear.

211. **At the praise of their own loveliness**—at being complimented for their beauty.

212. **Press the life from out young hearts**—break the hearts of young lovers. **Choking sighs**—sighs of anguish.

213. **Which ne'er might be repeated**—because they feared they might never meet again.

214. **Mutual eyes**—"looks of reciprocated affection" (K.).

215. **Since**— 'seeing that.' **Upon night so sweet**—following a night so pleasant.

The meaning of the last two lines is—Seeing that such a dreadful morning could follow such a mirtthful night, contrary to all expectations, no one could tell if the people who had assembled in the hall would meet again.

25

217. **Mounting**—Soldiers and officers mounting their horses.

218. **Mustering**—assembling together before marching to the field. **Squadron**—troops. **Clattering car**—gun carriages.

219. **Pouring forward**—marching in a steam. **Impetuous speed**—" hot haste." (1. 217).

220. **Forming in the ranks of war**—arranging themseives in battle order.

221. **Deep thunder**—booming of artillery. **Peal on peal**—continuous.

222. **Near**—at hand. **Beat**—sound. **Alarming**—calling to arms.

223. **Ere the morning star**—before daybreak.

224. **Thronged**—crowded in the streets. **The citizens**—sc. of Brussels. **Terror dumb**—speechless fear.

225. **White**—pale with fear.

26

226. **Wild and high**—in loud stirring notes. **Cameron's gathering**—the pibroch or tune on the bagpipe which calls together the Camerons, a famous clan of the Highlands.

NOTE.—Byron probably had in mind the fact that Kenneth Mackay, a piper of the Cameronian Highlanders (the 79th regiment) played round the troops while they were forming at Quatre Bras.

227. **War-note**—military tune. **Lochiel**—a lake and district in the north of Argyleshire, the home of the Cameron

clan ; hence the chief of the clan is often known simply as Lochiel.

Albyn—Scotland. **Which Albyn's hills have heard**—*i.e.*, which is a note familiar in Scotland.

228. **And heard too have her Saxon foes**—and which is likewise familiar in English ears on account of the many wars that were fought in ancient times between England and Scotland.

229. **Noon of night**—midnight. **Pibroch**—music of the bagpipe. **Thrills**—stirs one's feelings.

N.B.—The word 'thrills' suuggests the quivering notes of the bagpipe, and also the excitement produced by its music.

230. **Savage**—wildly exciting. **Shrill**—piercingly loud. **But with the breath which fills, etc.**—The construction is—But as their mountain-pipe fills with breath, so are the mountaineers filled with the daring which is instilled by the stirring memory of a thousand years. The meaning is—'In proportion as the bagpipe sound louder the courage of the Highlanders rises.

231. **Mountain-pipe**—bagpipe. **Mountaineers**—Highlanders.

232. **Native daring**—natural courage. **Instils**—infuses;—'memory' is the subject of this verb.

N.B.—Notice the use of 'fills' first as a transitive, and then as an intransitive verb.

233. **A thousand years**—a long glorious past. "The first chieftain of the Camerons is mentioned in the reign of Robert II (1370), but the legendary account goes back much further."

234. **Evan**—Sir Evan Cameron (1629-1719) was the last man in Scotland who maintained the royal cause in the great civil war. At the battle of Killiecrankie he charged barefoot at the head of his men. **Donald**—Donald Cameron, grandson of Sir Evan, joined the Young Pretender on his arrival in Scotland in 1745. He captured Edinburgh,

was severely wounded at Colloden, and then escaped to France.He died in 1748. **Rings in each clansman's ears**—inspires the members of the clan to this day.

27

235. **Ardennes**—the forest of Soignies lying between Brussels and Waterloo. This wood is, says Byron himself in note, "supposed to be a remnant of the forest of Ardennes famous in Bolardo's *Orlando*, and immortal in Shakespeare's "*As You Like It*."

236. **Dewy**—wet. **Nature's tear-drops**—rain.

237. **If august inanimate ever grieves**—if lifeless objects are at all susceptible to sorrow like human beings.

238. **The unreturning brave**—those brave soldiers who were doomed to die in that battle.

Note—The weather was rainy when the troops marched through the wood of Soignies to the field of Quatre Bras. This is represented by the poet as Nature weeping over so many brave men doomed to death in that battle.

239. **Ere evening**—in a few hours. **Trodden like the grass**—slain in battle and trampled underfoot.

240. **Which now beneath them**—Supply 'grows.' **Above**—over their graves.

241. **In its next verdure**—when next it grows in spring. **Fiery mass of living valour**—band of brave soldiers eager for the fight.

242. **Rolling on the foe**—charging the enemy.

243. **Burning with**—inspired with. **Moulder cold and low**—die and be buried in the ground.

N. B.—The metaphor in the last three lines is taken from a stream of molten lava running down the slopes of a volcano.

28

244 **Them**—these English soldiers. **Lusty**—vigorous.

245 **Beauty's circle**—the company of fair ladies ;—alludes to the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond. **Proudly gay**—full of high merriment.

246. **The signal sound of strife**—This refers to the booming for French artillery heard during the ball.

247. **Marshalling in arms**—arming of soldiers for battle.

248. **Battle's mangificently stern array**—troops drawn up in splendid battle order, determined to fight it to the last.

249. **Thunder-clouds**—the smoke of guns. **Close o'er it**—hide the scene. **Which when rent**—when the smoke clears away.

250. **Is covered**—is *found* covered. **Other clay**—*viz* dead bodies.

251 **Her own clay**—the dust. **Shall cover**—sc. when the dead bodies are buried.

Heaped and pent—huddled together in a pile.

252. **Red burial**—bloody grave. **Blent**—blended ; mixed together promiscuously.

There is an obvious confusion in this stanza between the battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo. The next and the following stanzas refer clearly to Waterloo.

29

253. **Hymned**—celebrated in poetry. **Loftier harps**—abler poets.

Byron is alluding to Scott who has celebrated the battle in his famous poem, *The Field of Waterloo.*

254. **One**—one hero, *viz,* the Hon'ble Frederick—Howard, youngest son of Lord Carlisle. **Proud throng**—glorious band.

255. **They blend me with his line**—he is said to have been a relation of mine.

N. B.,—Byron and Frederick Howard were second

cousins, the poet's great-aunt having been Howard's grandmother.

256. **I did his sire some wrong**—I unjustly satirised his father, the Earl of Carlisle.

N.B.—The Earl of Carlisle, who was Byron's guardian, had offended him by receiving coldly the dedication of the poet's first work, and by refusing to introduce him when Byron was about to take his seat in the House of Lords. In revenge, Byron attacked him in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in the lines concluding:

> 'No muse will cheer, with renovating smile,
> The paralytic pulling of Carlisle'.

Byron was afterwards very much ashamed of this.

257. **Bright**—famous. **Hallow**—sanctify. **Song**—poetry.

258. **His**—sc. name. **Showered**—fell ;—the Nominative to this verb is 'death-bolts' in the next line.

259. **Death-bolts**—shots and shells. **Thinned files**—attenuated ranks of the army.

260. **War's tempest**—shots and shells. **Lowered**—darkened ; threatened.

261. **They reached no nobler breast**—you were the noblest warrior slain in that battle.

30

262. **There have been tears and broken hearts for thee**—many people have mourned for your death.

263. **Mine**—my tears. **Were**—would be. **Nothing**—unavailing. **Had I such to give**—if I could weep for you.

264. **Fresh green tree**—When Byron went over the battle-field, his guide pointed out a small hollow close to two tall and solitary trees, as the place where Major Howard fell and was buried. His remains were afterwards taken to England.

265. **Living**—in all its freshness. **Where thou didst cease to live**—at the spot where you fell in battle.

266. **Revive**—"burst into life once more." (T.)

267. **Fertile promise**—indications of a plentiful growth of vegetation.

268. **Her work of gladness to contrive**—to cover the ground with beautiful verdure.

269. Reckless—free from care. **Upon the wing**—flying about in the air.

270. **All she brought**—all the beauties of the spring. **Those she could not bring**—the dead whom the spring season had no power to call back to life.

31

271. **Turned to**--thought of. **Thee**—refers to Major Howard.

272. **One as all**—all alike. **Ghastly gap**—mournful void.

273. **In his own kind and kindred**—in society at large and in his own family. **Whom to teach forgetfulness were mercy**—who mourn so disconsolately that it would be a kindness to them not to speak anything of the dead here. **For their sake**—even for the sake of the dead, who would rather have themselves forgotten than that their friends should mourn for them so bitterly.

275. **The Archangel's trump**—The reference is to the Bible, 1 *Thess. iv*, 16—"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise." **Glory's**—sc. trumpet.

276. **Those they thirst for**—those whom they wish to see again (*viz*, the fallen heroes of Waterloo). That is, those who fell at Waterloo will never rise again except on the Day of Judgement, however great the glory they may have gained. **The sound of Fame**—*i.e.*, the consideration that they have gained so much renown.

277. **Soothe**—console (the hearts of the mourners). **Slake**—satisfy.

278. **The fever of vain longing**—their ceaseless but useless desire to have the dead brought back to life. **The name so honoured**—the person thus celebrated in poetry.

279. **But assumes a stronger bitterer claim**—only makes us mourn all the more bitterly. That is, at first the thought of a dear one's glory is a consolation ; but soon that very thought makes us mourn all the more bitterly by making us feel how great has been our loss.

32

280. **They mourn but smile at length**—their sorrow ceases by slow degrees. **Smiling mourn**—though happy outwardly they mourn inwardly all the same.

281-287. These seven lines contain a series of similes to illustrate the thought of the last line of the stanza—*viz.*, that life may go on outwardly in the same way long after real happiness and worth of it have gone owing to some sad bereavement.

281. **The tree will wither.........fall**—a tree may remain standing appearing outwardly the same, long after its inside has become hollow.

282. **Hull**—the framework of a ship. **Drives on**—may keep floating. **Mast and sail**—the essential parts of a vessel.

283 **Roof-tree**—the beam that supports a roof. **Sinks**—falls down. **Moulders on**—stands in ruins.

284. **In massy horiness**—old yet strong.

285. **Wind-worn**—weather-beaten. **Battlements**—the ornamental outer works of a fortification.

286. **Bars**—prison-bars. **Survive**—outlast. **Enthral**—imprison.

287. **Drags through**—passes on wearily. **Keep out**—hide.

288. **The heart will break**—life may suffer a sad bereavement and lose all its interest and happiness thereby. **Brokenly**—in this bereaved state. **Live on**—continue for many years.

33

289, 290. **Which the glass in every fragment mulitiplies** the different pieces of the glass make many mirrors out of one. **And makes a thousand images of one that was**—and instead of a single reflection as formerly existed there is now a large number of them.

292. **The same and still the more**—the image reflected is the same in all the pieces, only the nümber of reflections increases.

Explanation. *Even as a broken mirror which the glass ....breaks*—A bereaved heart is like a broken mirror. The greater the shock the larger the nnmber of fragments into which a mirror breaks, in the same way the havier the loss the havier the bereavement. Again, the greater the number of fragments the larger the number of reflections of seme image ; in the same way the greater the sorrow the greater the variety of ways in which the sufferer may be reminded of the lost one

293. **Which not forsakes**—which never forgets the lost one.

294. **In shattered guise**—" brokenly." **Still**—silent ; such a sorrow makes no demonstration—it is speechless. **Cold**—devoid of emotion ; such a heart has no love to bestow on another.

295. **Bloodless**—with no vitality left in it. **Sleepless**—restless. **Aches**—suffers pain.

296. **Withers on**—continues to lead a lifeless existence—with no interest left in the world. **All without**—*i.e.*, its outward semblance. **Old**—decayed.

297. **Showing no visible sign**—making no outward demonstration of sorrow ; giving no utterance to grief.

Such things—*i.e.* such heavy griefs. **Untold**—incapable of being expressed in words.

34

298. **A very life**—a kind of sustaining power, a power of keeping man alive.

299. **Vitality of poison**—despair, though tending to destroy life, has yet the power to sustain life, poison which though it kills has yet the power of prolonging life. **Quick**—living.

300. **A quick root which feeds these deadly branches**—despair is thus like the vital sap of a poisonous tree, which, though poison, is what gives the tree its life. **For it were as nothing did we die**—for "death under such circumstances would be no evil." (T.)

301. **Suit itself**—adapt itself.

302. **Sorrow's most detested fruit**—the worst sufferings of sorrow.

303. **Apples on the Dead Sea's shore**—a kind of gall-nut believed to grow on the banks of the Dead Sea —a salt lake in Palestine—which was said to be fair on the outside but contained a pulp of ashes within. *Vide* English Bible, *Deut*. xxxii. 32.

304. **All ashes to the taste**—very bitter in taste.

N. B.—The 'fruit of sorrow' (*i. e.*, the misery caused by sorrow) is compared to this fabled apple found on the shores of the Dead Sea, because both are very bitter. The simile must not be pressed further than the single point mentioned by the poet himself—"all ashes to the taste."

304. 305. **Did man compute existence by enjoyment**—if mankind reckoned as life only the hours passed in happiness. **Count o'er**—*i. e.*, set off.

306, **Such hours**—thee brief periods of happiness. **Would he name threescore**—would he be willing to live for sixty years ?

The meaning is—Man's life is so full of sorrows that no one will be found to have lived sixty years (the average length of human life as stated in the Bible) if he reckoned only the *happy* hours as life.

35

307. **The psalmist**—The reference is to the *Book of Psalms* in the Old Testament. *Vide* Psalm xc. 10.—"The years of our age are threescore years and ten," **Numbered out the years of man**—set the average length of human life at seventy.

308. **They are enough**—it is a high average. **Thy tale**—the lesson taught by thee—*viz.*, Waterloo. **If thy tale be true**—if we may judge from what the battle of Waterloo has to teach us regarding the duration of human life.

309. **Thou**—refers to Waterloo. **Didst grudge him**—denied him ; did not permit him to attain. **That fleeting span**—that brief length (seventy years).

310. **More than enough**—then seventy years is too high an average.

Battles like that of Waterloo cut down the lives of countless numbers who never attain the limit of seventy. Judging from this it seems that the average set down by the Psalmist is too high.

311. **Millions of tongues record thee**—Waterloo is preserved in the recollections of countless numbers of men ; it is a memorable battle.

312. **Their children's lips shell echo them**—posterity will likewise recolleet the event.

313. **United nations**—*viz.*, England, Prussia, and France fighting together.

314. **Our countrymen......day**—it was a national victory.

315 **This is much**—renown with posterity is ample recom-

pense. **All which will not pass away**—the only thing which is imperishable.

36

316. **There**—at Waterloo. **Sunk**—met with his downfall. **Nor**—and not. **Greatest**—sc. in point of warlike fame. **Worst**—sc. in point of character.

317. **Spirit**—character. **Antithetically mixt**—combining contradictory qualities.

N. B.—Note that there is no verb to this sentence. The verb 'was' should be understood with the phrase 'of the mighties.'

318. **One moment of the mighties**—he seemed to be one of the greatest heroes of the world.

Again—at another time.

319. **Little**—vulgar. **Like firmness**—an equal degree of tenacity.

320. **Extreme**—immoderate ; excessive. **In all things**—in nobility as well as in vulgarity. **Hadst thou been betwixt**—if you had adopted the golden mean ; if you had kept within the limit of moderation.

320. **Had still been thine**—you would still have retained your kingdom. **Or never been**—or perhaps you had never become a king at all.

322. **Daring made the rise as fall**—it was your boundless ambition that raised you to the throne and the same ambition at last brought about your downfall. **Seekst**—descry

323. **Even new**—even when you are a prisoner at St. Helena. **Re-assume the imperial mien**—behave again like an Emperor.

324. **Shake the world**—disturb the peace of Europe. **Thunderer of the scene**—the terror of every country visited by you.

37

325. **Conqueror and captive of the earth**—you are now a prisoner in the hands of the same world which you subdued.

326. **Trembles at thee**—is afraid of you. **Wild**—dreadful.

327. **Bruited**—noised abroad; talked about.

328. **Save**—except. **The jest of fame**—one whom Fame has mocked, *i.e.*, one who from the pinnacle of fame has fallen to the lowest point of degradation.

329. **Woo'd**—flattered; courted. **Thy vassal**—as thy obedient and faithful servant.

That is, your love of fame induced you to do acts of tyranny that never failed to contribute to your glory.

330. **The flatterer of thy fierceness**—something that encouraged you in your tyranny; *i.e.*, your ambition tempted you to commit all sorts of atrocities.

331. **A god unto thyself**—a person who refused to acknowledge any law except his own will; *i.e.*, a person who regarded himself as omnipotent. **Nor less the same**—you appeared likewise as a god.

332. **Astounded**—thunder-struck. **All inert**—utterly helpless.

333. **Deemed thee**—regarded you. **Whate'er thou didst appear**—as the very thing you posed as—as a veritable god.

That is, Napoleon began to regard himself as omnipotent, and the helpless nations he had conquered thought the same while his fortunes kept in the ascendant.

38

334. **More or less than man**—sometimes appearing superhuman, sometimes brutish. **In high or low**—in prosperous or adverse circumstances.

335. **Battling with nations**—fighting bravely against the combined armies of severa European powers (such as the

Russians, Prussians, and Austrians). **Flying from the field**—running timidly away from a battle.

336. **Now—now**—at one time—at another time. **Making monarchs' necks thy footstool**—insulting vanquished monarchs by treating them as slaves. There is a reference here to the old custom of placing the foot on the neck of the conquered as mentioned in the Bible. Cf. *Joshua*—

"And it came to pass, when they brought out these kings unto Joshua that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them."

337. **More**—more tamely. **Meanest soldier**—humblest private. **Taught**—willing. **Yield**—surrender yourself to the hands of the enemy.

338. **Crush**—overcome ; subdue—*e.g.*, the German Empire. **Command**—govern ;—*e.g.*, France. **Rebuild**—newly organise ;—*e.g.*, Italy.

339. **Govern**—control.

That is, while able easily to control the affairs of a vast empire you were unable to control your own passions. It was in fact this want of self-restraint that brought about your downfall.

340. **Deeply skilled**—thorough master. **In men's spirits**—in forming estimates of the character of other people.

341. **Look through thy own**—find out the defects of your own character. **Curb**—restrain. **Lust of war**—inordinate desire for conquest.

34.. **Tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star**—good fortune will desert the luckiest man, if he is in the habit of undertaking rash adventures merely to test his destiny. Napoleon never knew this.

39

343. **Yet**—in spite of these defects. **Well**—nobly; calmly. **Brooked the turning tide**—endured misfortune.

344. **With**—with the aid of. **Untaught**—natural ; instinctive. **Innate**—inherent in your own mind—not derived from any external source. **Philosophy**—fortitude based on a reasoned view of human affairs. The Stoic philosophy of the Greeks taught this kind of fortitude.

345. **Be it**—whether it be. **Coldness**—insensibility to feeling ; hard-heartedness. **Deep pride**—haughty defiance.

346. **Gall and wormwood**—exceedingly bitter. Both are kinds of bitter poison.

The meaning is—whatever this calm endurance of misfortune might have been due to—whether to wisdom or to hard-heartedness or to pride—it was very bitter to your enemies to see you bearing adversity so nobly.

347. **The whole host of hatred**—a crowd of your enemies.

N.B.—'Hatred' is here abstract for concrete, and stands for 'enemies who hated you.'

Hard by—near at hand.

348. **Watch**—observe how you bore your sorrows. **Mock thee shrinking**—laugh at you if you winced.

349. **Sedate**—serene. **All-enduring eye**—looks of imperturbable calm.

350. **Fled** *i.e.*, deserted. **Her spoiled and favourite child**—*i.e.*, Napoleon, who had been tempted by continued good luck to commit excesses which ultimately brought about his fall.

Napoleon is here called the "child" of Fortune, because he was raised to power through sheer good luck. Just as a pet child becomes spoiled by too much indulgence, in the same way Napoleon became guilty of heedless tyranny by continued good fortune in his undertakings.

351. **Unbowed**—self-possessed ; refusing to submit.

Beneath the ills upon him piled—under the weight of his sorrows.

40

352. **Sager**—wiser in adversity. **Fortunes**—prosperity.

353. **In them**—in prosperity. **Steeled thee on too far to show**—hardened your nature too much, so that you came to display.

354. **Just**—deserved. **Contemn**—despise.

N.B.—The word "just" here suggests that Byron approves the scorn of mankind which Napoleon felt, for he himself entertained a like feeling. But it was the *expression* of it which he disapproved.

355. **To feel**—to entertain that habitual contempt for all men. **Not so**—but not wise.

356. **Wear it on thy lip and brow**—to express it openly by word and look.

357. **Spurn**—despise ; scorn. **Instruments**—*i.e.*, your servants and subordinates who were the means to your greatness.

358. **Turned unto thine overthrow**—changed into the means of bringing about your downfall.

359. **To win or lose**—whether we win it or lose it. Earthly power and greatness is of no value, so that the gain or the loss of it matters nothing.

360. **So**—*i.e.*, worthless. **Such lot who choose**—who choose such lot as yours ; *i.e.*, who, like you, aspire after earthly power.

41

361. **Headlong**—steep ; precipitous.

362. **Made to**—so constituted as to. **Stand or fall alone**—be wholly independent of other men at all times, in prosperity as well as adversity.

363. **Had helped**—would have helped you. **Brave the shock**—bear your misfortunes more easily.

364. **Men's thoughts**—*i.e.*, "the popular belief that you were invincible." (T.) Or, the phrase may mean 'popularity.' **Were the steps which paved thy throne**—contributed chiefly to the maintenance of your rule.

365. **Thy best weapon shone**—the chief source of your strength in war.

366. **Part**—role. **Philip's son**—Alexander the Great, son of Philip, king of Macedonia who ruled from 336 B.C. to 323. He was one of the greatest conquerors of antiquity. **The part of Philip's son was thine**—you should have adopted Alexander as your model; your part was that of a conqueror. **Then**—at least as long as you were king.

367. **Unless aside thy purple had been thrown**—unless you had resigned your kingly power. 'Purple' is emblematic of royalty.

368. **Stern**—uncompromising. **Diogenes**—a cynic philosopher who despised all unpractical knowledge and all possessions outside the bare necessaries of life, and lived in a tub. Alexander once went to see him. To the king's first words 'I am Alexander the Great,' the philosopher answered, 'I am Diogenes the Cynic.' When Alexander asked whether he could do anything for him, Diogenes said, "Yes, you can stand out of the sunshine." The king is said to have remarked on leaving, 'If I were not Alexander, I should wish to be Diogenes.'

Mock at men—show a habitual contempt for mankind.

369. **Sceptred cynics**—cynical kings. The cynics were a sect of Greek philosophers who prided themselves on showing contempt for all that men hold dear. They were so called from a Greek word meaning dog. **Earth were far too wide a den**—*i.e.*, cynical kings should content themselves with a dwelling much less extensive than the man world-wide empire which Napoleon aspired after.

Explanation.—Stanza 41.—If Napoleon had been entirely independent of the help of his fellow-men, such contempt for mankind as he showed would have enabled him to bear his misfortune more easily. But the fact was that the popular opinion of him contributed chiefly to the maintenance of his

rule, and constituted the main source of his strength. He ought therefore to have assumed only the character of a conqueror, not that of a cynic, at least as long as he remained a king, for cynical kings should content themselves with a dwelling less extensive than the world-wide empire which Napoleon aspired after.

42

370. **Quiet**—peace. **Quick bosoms**—restless natures. **Hell**—a source of extreme pain.

371. **There**—in that fact. **Bane**—poison ; *i.e.*, the fatal quality of your character. **Fire**—energy.

372. **Motion**—restlessness. **Dwell in its own narrow being**—rest satisfied with a circumscribed existence.

374. **Beyond the fitting medium of desire**—for things outside the limits of propriety.

375. **Kindled**—aroused. **Quenchless evermore**—longing ceaselessly.

376. **Preys upon**—dwells on ; seeks. **High adventure**—tasks of extreme difficulty. **Tire**—grow weary.

377. **Aught but**—anything except. **Rest**—inactivity. **Fever**—*i.e.*, a disease. **At the core**—*i.e.*, affecting the vital part of the mind ; in the centre of the heart.

378. **Bears**—suffers from it.

Explanations.—Stanza 42—But peace and quiet are a source of great pain to men of restilss natures. And this was the cause of Napoleon's ruin. There is a kind of energy or restlessness of mind which does not permit a man to be content with things as they are, but forces him to desire things outside the limits of propriety. If once this feeling is aroused, it develops into a ceaseless longing, and the man thenceforwad seeks to do tasks of extreme difficulty, feeling impatient only when he has nothing to do. It is a kind of mental disease that causes the death of the person who is subject to it or *has been* subject to it.

43

379. **This**—this mental disease—"fever at the core"; restlessness of mind or overweening ambition.

Makes the madmen—chracterises enthusiasts of all kinds. **Made men mad by their contagion**—communicated some of their enthusiasm to those who came in contact with them.

381. **Sect**—religious creeds. **Systems**—philosophical schools. **To whom add**—also.

382. **Sophists**—a class of men who taught eloquence, philosophy, and politics in ancient Greece. **Bards**—poets. **Unquiet things**—restless beings.

383. **Stir too strongly the soul's secret springs**—are always unduly restless in disposition.

384. **Are themselves the fools to those they fool**—"from duping others they in turn come to be duped by them." (T.) Their ambition at last recoils on their own head.

385. **Envied yet how unenviable**—men are found to envy their greatness but, if rightly viewed, their lot is far from desirable. **What stings are theirs !**—what inward torments they constantly feel !

386. **One breast laid open**—if we examine the real state of feeling of a single one of these so-called great men. **A school**—a source of instruction.

387. **Unteach**—cause them to renounce. **The lust to shine or rule**—the ambition to be a great man or a king.

Explanation.—Stanza 43.—This mental disease characterizes distinguished men in all paths of life, who communicate the infection to their followers, *e.g.* conquerors, kings, founders of creeds and schools of philosophy, sophists, poets, politicians. All these are essentially restless beings who from duping others come in turn to be duped by them.

Men are found to envy their position, but, if rightly viewed their lot is far from desirable. What inward torments they constantly feel ! If we examine the real state of feeling of a single one of these so-called great men, we shall renounce for ever the ambition to be a great man or a king.

44

388. **Their breath is agitation**—every moment of their life is spent in unrest—they do not enjoy peace for a single moment.

389. **A storm whereon they ride**—a ceaseless turmoil which for a time makes for activity. **To sink at last**—but in the end brings about their ruin.

390. **Nursed**—brought up in. **Bigoted**—strongly attached to. **Strife**—agitation ; commotion.

391. **Days**—life. **Surviving perils past**—escaping all danger.

392. **Melt to calm twilight**—attain a peaceful old age. **Overcast**—dejected.

393. **Supineness**—indolence; having nothing to do.

394. **Even as**—just like. **Unfed**—sc. by oil. **Runs to waste**—dies down. **Laid by**—not in use.

395. **Eats into itself**—is destoyed by rust. **Ingloriously**—in a shameful manner—becaause the proper use of a sword is to be employed against the enemy.

Explanation.—Stanza 44.—The lives of ambitious men are spent in unrest and consist of a ceaseless turmoil which for a time keeps up their activity and in the end brings about their ruin. Such men are so habituated and attached to a life of excitement that, even if they, by escaping all danger, attain to a calm old age, they feel dejected and down cast when they have nothing to do. And so they perish whendeprived of the means of action: like a torch from which the supply of oil is withheld, or a sword which is not in use and is destroyed by rust.

45

399. **Surpasses**—rise higher than. **Subdues**—overcomes.

400. **Look down on**—rise above. **The hate of those below**—the hatred of his fellow-men above whom he has risen.

401. **The sun of glory**—the brightness of fame. **Glow**—shine upon him.

402. **The earth and ocean spread**—he has a world at his command.

403. **Icy rocks**—*i.e.* the jealousy and hatred of his fellow-men.

404. **Contending tempests**—*i.e.* difficulties and dangers. Naked—undefended; bare.

Explanation.—**Stanza 45.**—Just as the man who climbs a mountain finds himself surrounded by dense clouds and snow in the midst of the highest peaks, in the same way the man who rises to greatness must expect to encounter the jealousy and hatred of his follow men. Just as this climber, though he finds bright sunshine above him, and the earth and sea stretching at his feet, is immediately beset with snow-clad rocks and tempests, in the same way the man of greatness, though he may enjoy full fame and have a world at his command, is surrounded with difficulties and dangers and knows no peace or rest. And this is the reward of ambition.

46

406. **Away with these**—no more of this; let me drop this subject. **Wisdom's world**—the the best sphere of action for a wise man.

407. **Within its own creation**—*i e.*, communing with one's own thoughts and feelings. **Or in Thine, Maternal Nature**—or in the study of external nature.

N.B.—The word 'maternal' suggests that nature is the nourisher of everything.

408. **Who teems like thee**—nothing is so prolific as nature.

That is, nature grows in wild luxuriance on the banks of the Rhine.

409. **A work divine**—a grand scene.

410. **Blending**—intermixture. **Dells**—valleys.

Crag—cliffs.

413. **Chiefless**—*i.e.*, lying in ruins. **Breathing stern farewells**—meeting the traveller with their hoary looks.

414. **Gray**—hoary with age. **Leafy**—overgrown with plants and bushes. **Where Ruin greenly dwells**—*i.e.*, where the look of desolation is mitigated by the green foliage biding the bare walls.

47

415. **They**—*viz.*, the feudal castles on the banks of the Rhine. **Lofty mind**—a noble nature.

416. **Worn**—in ruins; *i.e.*, in adversity. **Unstooping to the baser crowd**—still erect; *i.e.*, without cringing for the favours of the low-minded rich and great.

417. **Tenantless**—unoccupied. **Save to**—except by. **Crannying wind**—the wind blowing into them through the clinks and cracks in the walls.

418. **Holding dark communion with the cloud**—enveleoped in thick mists.

419. **Young and proud**—strong and glorious.

420. **Banners on high**—they had flags waving on the top. **Passed**—were fought. **Below**—at the foot of them.

421. **They who fought**—the feudal chiefs who fought those battles. **In a bloody shroud**—*i. e.*, dead and gone.

422. **Those which waved**—their banners. **Shredless dust**—decayed and turned to dust, without a shred being left. **Ere now**—long ago.

423. **Bleak**—cold; *i. e.*, desolate. **Battlements**—castle walls. **Shall bear no future blow**—are so shattered that they can no more stand an assault.

48

424. **Beneath......walls**—in these feudal castles.

425. **Power dwelt amidst her passions**—powerful chiefs lived, swayed by their strong passions.

N.B.—Power is here personified and spoken of as a king surrounded by his retinue, the passions.

In proud state—in magnificence; with pomp and splendour.

426. **Upheld**—maintained. **Armed halls**—fortified castles.

427. **Doing his evil will**—committing what havoc he pleased. **No less elate than**—as much puffed up with pride as.

428. **Mightier heroes**—greater lords. **Of a longer date**—whose fame has been more permanent.

429. **What want these outlaws conquerors should have**—*i.e.*, these robber chiefs possessed all the attributes of a conqueror except, etc.

N B.—Notice the omission of the relative pronoun before 'conquerors,' 'Want' means 'lack'. The feudal chiefs are here called *outlaws*, because of their lawless habits.

Byron in a note to this line says—

'What wants that knave that a king should have?' was the question of king James V of Scotland (1529) on meeting Johnny Armstrong (the noted Border robber) and his followers in full accoutrements.

430. **History's purchased page**—a mention of their name in history made by some venal historian.

431. **A wider space**—a larger field of action; or, a larger domain. **An orsnamnted grave**—a grand mausoleum.

432. **Not lees warm**—quite as ambitious as those of famous conquerors. **Full as brave**—equally brave.

The meaning is—The fedual chiefs were quite as proud as the renowned conquerors of the earth. They had in fact all the attributes of greatness except a record

of their deeds in history made by some venal historian, a larger domain, and a monument over their tombs. Otherwise in ambition and in courage they were in no wise inferior.

49

433. **Baronial feuds**—petty wars between one chief and another. **Single fights**—personal combats.

434. **Deeds of prowess**—acts of valour. **Unrecorded died**—have been foregotten owing to their having found no mention in history.

435. **Lent a blazon to their shield**—furnished them with a coat-of:arms depicted on their shields.

436. **Emblems**—devices. The old knights in the days of chivalry wore each a device on his sheld ; *e.g.*,. a firebrand, or a bleeding heart, or a crane etc. **Well devised**—admirably invented. **Amorous pride**—pride for their lady-love.

437. **Through all the mail of iron hearts would glide**—though their hearts were hard enough to resist all tender influences they were still susceptible to the emotion of love.

N.B.—The nominative to 'would glide' is 'love' in line 435.

438. **Flame**—love. **Was fiereness**—*i.e.*, it inspired them with the fierce desire for fighting. **Drew on**—provoked.

439. **Keen contest**—deadly war. **Destruction near allied**—devastation which is closely associated with war.

440. **Tower**——castle. **Fair mischief**—some beautiful lady who was the cause of war.

441. **Discoloured**—with its waters stained with blood. **Its ruin**—the wrecks of the castle thus conquered for winning the hand of some fair maiden. **Run**—flow.

Explanation.—Stanza 49—The feudal chiefs fought bravely in their petty wars and personal combats : but their acts of valour have been forgotten for not having found mention in history. But though so bold and courageous, their hearts were yet susceptible to the tender influence of

love. In battles they wore devices on their shields expressing love and containing a challenge to their foes on behalf of their ladylove. But their love inspired them with the fierce desire for fighting, and provoked deadly wars and worked deadly havoc in the surrounding country, so that the waters of the Rhine were stained with blood each time a stronghold was subdued for the sake of some fair lady.

50

442. **Exulting**—*i.e.*, flowing in a swift current. **Abounding**—full. **River**—*viz.*, the Rhine.

443. **A Blessing**—a source of fertility to the surrounding country.

444. **Endure**—last.

445. **Could man but leave thy bright creation so**—if only man abstained from destroying the beauty and fertility of thy banks.

446. **Its fair promise**—the growing crops which offer good prospects of a plentiful harvest. **Mow**—cut down ; destroy.

447. **Sharp scythe of conflict**—the havoc of war. The word 'scythe' is suggested by the word 'mow' in the preceding line. **Then**—if man would leave them as they were.

448. **Thy valley of sweet waters**—the beautiful Rhine valley.

449. **Earth paved like Heaven**—earth resembling heaven in beauty.

The meaning is.—If the beauty of the surrounding country had not been destroyed by the havoc of war, it would have equalled heaven itself in beauty.

And to seem such to me—and to look like heaven in my eyes.

450. **Even now**—even as it is ; even with its beauty marred. **Lethe**—one of the rivers of Greek mythology of which the dead were believed to drink and by drinking of which they forgot all about their past lives. **And to**

seem such to me, even now......be—and even with its beauty marred, the Rhine would seem to me heaven if it could cause me to forget my past.

51

451. **Have assailed thy banks**—have been fought on thy banks.

452. **These have passed away**—*i.e.,* no battles are fought there now.

Half their fame has passed away—*i.e.,* those battles of the past are now forgotten.

453. **Slaughter heaped on high his weltering ranks**—*i.e.,* large numbers of men were killed in those battles.

N.B.—Slaughter is here personified and spoken of as piling up the bodies of the slain in a heap. *Weltering* means 'rolling in their own blood'.

454. **What are they ?**—they too are forgotten.

455. **Thy tide washed down the blood of yesterday**—the waters of the Rhine bear no trace of the blood that has so often stained them.

456. **Stainless**—pure.

457. **Glassed**—reflected itself. **Dancing**—lightly moving up and down with the motion of the waters. **Sunny ray**—bright sunshine.

458. **Blackened**—darkened with recollections of mournful events. **Blighting**—tending to destroy pleasure. **Dream**—recollection.

459. **Vainly**—without being able to obliterate the impression. **All-sweeping**—tend ing to obliterate everything. **As**—though.

The meaning of the last two lines is :—The waters of the Rhine bear no trace of the blood that has so often stained them ; but they cannot obliterate the impression that all this slaughter has made upon History.

52

460. **Thus**—refers to the last two lines of the preceding stanza. **Inly said**—said within himself.

461. **Yet**—though the place was associated with war and bloodshed. **Not insensible to**—full of admiration for. **All**—all the beauty.

462. **Awoke**—roused. **Jocund**—merry.

463. **Glens**—narrow valleys between hills. **Which might have made even exile dear**—so beautiful that even a banished man would enjoy happiness here.

464. **Brow**—face. **Graven**—marked. **Lines austere**—traces of past sorrow.

465. **Tranquil sternness**—a look of calm endurance.

466. **Fiercer**—more violent. **Less severe**—less painful,—through the effect of habit.

467. **Joy was not...face**—he sometimes wore a look of gladness.

468. **O'er it**—over Harold's face. **Steal**—come imperceptibly. **With transient trace**—for a moment only.

53

469. **Nor was all love shut from him**—he was still capable of loving. **Days of passion**—youth, when he was given to strong feeling.

470. **Consumed themselves to dust**—been wasted ; been burnt out.

471, 72. **It is in vain......upon us**—*i.e.*, it is impossible not to reciprocate the affection of those who love us.

472, 73. **The heart must leap kindly back to kindness**—we cannot help returning the kindness of those who are kind to us.

474. **Weaned it**—alienated our sympathies. **Worldlings**—heartless people—who care only for sordid gain and do not give way to sentiment. **Thus he felt**—he felt his heart softened by love.

475. **Soft**—loving. **Sweet trust**—loving confidence.

476. **One fond breast**—*viz.*, his half-sister Augusta, to whom the poet was greatly attached, and to whom he addresses the song that follows. 'Fond' here means 'affectionate'. **To which his own would melt**—for whom he felt love.

477. **In its tenderer hour**—in moments of more than usual tenderness. **On that his bosom dwelt**—he would fondly think of her.

54

479. **In such as him**—in a man of his nature. **Strange of mood**—curious.

480. **The helpless looks of blooming infancy**—the beautiful innocent faces of little children.

481. **Its earliest nurture**—the period of babyhood.

Note.—Byron had a great love for children. *Cf.* Stanzas 115 and 116 of this canto.

What—what circumstance. **Subdued**—softened.

482. **To change like this**—to feel a love for children. **So far imbued**—so completely filled.

483. **It little boots**—it is no use.

N.B.—'Boots' in this sense comes from an old English word *bot* meaning 'profit.'

484. **Thus it was**—this was a fact ; let it be accepted as a fact.

485. **Nipped**—cut off at their commencement.

That is, an affection interrupted at its very commencement has usually very little chance to develop, apart from the object loved.

486. **This**—this feeling. **Glowed**—continued to dwell as strong as ever. **When all beside had ceased to glow**—when everything else had lost all interest for him.

55

487. **One soft breast**—*viz.*, his half-sister, Augusta. **As hath been said**—sc. in line 476 above.

488. **Unto his was bound**—was attached to him. **Stronger ties**—firmer bond.

489. **Than the church links withal**—than the bond of marriage. **Unwed**—it was not married love.

490. **Far above disguise**—being too noble to need any concealment.

491. **Stood the test of**—been unshaken by. **Mortal enmities**—fear of public scandal.

492. **Cemented**—made more strong.

493. **Peril**—risk of calumny. **Dreaded most in female eyes**—which women out of their natural timidity are most afraid of.

494. **A foreign shore**—a distant land.

495. **That heart**—*viz.*, his beloved sister. **His**—his heart. **These absent greetings**—this token of love, when I am away from her—*viz.*, the song that follows. **Pour**—be offered.

THE SONG

(I)

496. **Castled crag**—hill fort. **Drachenfells**—(or the Dragon's Rock) is a castle built about 1100 A.D. on the highest of the seven mountains, on the right bank of the Rhine, about eight miles south-east of Bonn.

497. **Frowns o'er**—overhangs. **Winding**—flowing in a zigzag current.

498. **Breast of waters**—current. **Swells**—flows.

499. **Which bear the vine**—overgrown with vineyards.

500. **Rich**—thickly covered with. **Blossomed trees**—trees bearing flowers.

501. **Fields which promise corn and wine**—cornfields and vineyards.

502. **Scattered**—lying here and there on all sides. **Crowning these**—bounding the landscape.

503. **Far**—seen at a distance. **Shine**—dazzle in the sunshine.

504. **Strewed a scene**—formed a landscape.

505. **Thou**—refers to his sister Augusta.

(2)

507. **Hands which offer early flowers**—flower-girls selling flowers early in the morning.

508. **Paradise**—a place of supreme beauty.

509. **Above**—high up on the hills. **The frequent feudal towers**—many a castle of feudal chiefs.

510. **Lift their walls of gray**—peep to view with their hoary walls.

511. **Steeply**—built on the slopes of precipitous rocks. **Lowers**—presents an awful look; "frowns."

512. **In proud decay**—majestic though in ruins.

513. **Look o'er**—overlook. **Vale**—the valley of the Rhine. **Vintage-bowers**—hollows in the rocks shaded over with vines.

514. **Want**—lack.

(3)

516. **Given to me**—sc. by some of these flower-girls.

517. **Thy hand they touch**—they reach you.

518. **Reject them not**—do not cast them away. **As such**—because they are withered.

519. **Cherished**—valued.

520. **Meet thine eye**—be seen by you.

521. **Guide thy soul to mine**—make you think of me.

522. **Drooping**—hanging low. **Nigh**—by your side.

(4)

526. **Nobly**—grandly. **Foams and flows**—flows, forming eddies in its current.

527. **The charm of this enchanted ground**—the secret source of the romantic beauty and fertility of this tract of country.—Case in apposition with 'river'.

528. **All its thousand turns disclose**—in every nook and corner you find.

529. **Fresher**—more and more pleasing to the eye. **Varying round**—each time of a new kind.

530. **Haughtiest breast**—the most ambitious man. **Its wish might bound**—might be contented.

531. **Through life to dwell delighted here**—to live here happily all his life.

533. **To nature so dear**—so lovely in natural beauty.

534. **Could thy dear eyes......Rhine**—if only you had been here to enjoy and add to the beauty of the scene.

56

536. **Coblentz**—a town standing at the junction of the

Rhine and Moselle, and hence called **Confluentes** by the Romans. A rise of **gentle ground**—a gentle slope.

N.B.—The above phrase contains an example of transferred epithet, the epithet 'gentle' being transferred from 'rise' to 'ground'.

537. **Pyramid**—a mound of earth.

538. **Crowning the summit**—standing on the top of. **Verdant mound**—green slope.

539. **Beneath its base......hid**—*i.e.*, the mound marks the burial place of two warriors—Generals Marceau and Hoche. Both are buried in the same grave. *Marceau* was a general of the French Republic, who conducted the war in La Vendee with great humanity and success. He fell in a battle with the Austrians in 1796. Byron tells us that his funeral was attended by the generals and detachments from both armies. Hoche was the greatest general of the French Republic before the rise of Bonaparte. He died in 1797.

540. **Our enemy's**—The singular 'enemy' is an example of faulty grammar, because it refers to two heroes, Marceau and Hoche.

That—the fact that he was our enemy. **Forbid**—deny.

541. **Early tomb**—he died at the early age of 27.

542. **Big tears**—tears of deep sorrow. **Rough soldiers**—soldiers unaccustomed to weeping. **Lid**—eyelids.

543. **Such a doom**—*i.e.*, such a glorious death.

544. **Falling for France**—laying down his life for the sake of his country. **Whose rights**—the ancient privileges of the French nation. **Resume**—win back.

57

546. **Two hosts, his friends and foes**—the French and Austrian forces.

547. **Fitly**—rightly. **Stranger**—tourist. **Lingering**—pausing ; making a brief halt.

548. **Bright repose**—peace in heaven.

549. **Freedom's champion**—one who fought for the sake of his country's liberty.

550. **O'erstept**—made undue use of.

551. **Charter to chastise**—authority to punish. **She**—Freedom.

552. **Such as wield her weapons**—those that fight for freedom.

553. **Whiteness**—purity ; innocence. **Thus**—for this reason.

The meaning is—The liberators of a country from tyranny, while putting down oppression in one form, set it up in another by themselves committing tyrannical excesses. Marceau was one who kept himself strictly within the bounds of moderation in this respect, and did not commit the slightest unnecessary violence. That was why he was so dearly loved and mourned.

58

554. **Ehrenbreitstein**—(or the Broad Stone of Honour) was one of the strongest fortresses in Europe. It was built in 1748 and stands on the banks of the Rhine, opposite Coblentz. It was forced by famine to surrender to the French in 1799, and was demolished by blasting. The fortifications have since been restored by Germany.

555. **Black with the miner's blast**—black with the smoke of the blasting which demolished the fort in 1799. **Upon her height**—"in her commanding position." (T.)

556. **Yet**—even in this shattered condition. **Of what she was**—how strong the fort formerly was. **Shell and ball**—cannon shots.

557. **Idly**—vainly ; without damaging the walls in the

least. **Her strength**—her strong fortifications ;—abstract for concrete. **'Light**—descend.

558. **A tower of victory**—an impregnable fortress. **Flight**—running away.

559. **Baffled**—frustrated in their attempt to conquer the place.

560. **Peace destroyed what war could never blight**—at last the impregnable fortress was demolished by blasting, although it could never be breached by siege guns.

561. **And laid those proud roofs......rain**—and knocked down the strong roofs of the fort, making the summer's rain enter the interior.

562. **The iron shower**—streams of shots and shells.

N.B.—Notice the fine contrast between the summer's rain and the deadly shower of shots and shells.

Poured in vain—produced no effect.

59

564. **Stranger**—tourist. **Fain**—gladly. **Linger**—pause before leaving the place.

565. **Souls united**—a couple of loving friends.

566. **Lonely Contemplation**—a single individual absorbed in thought. **Thus**—as I am doing now. **Stray**—wander about.

567. **Ceaseless vultures**—the pangs of conscience. The allusion is to the Greek story of Prometheus who was punished by the gods by being chained to a rock and his liver exposed to be devoured by birds of prey. **Prey on**—torment.

568. **Self-condemning bosoms**—persons suffering from the stings of their own conscience. **Were**—would be.

569. **Nor—nor**—neither—nor. **Sombre**—solemn. **Gay**—lively.

570. **Wild**—luxuriant. **Rude**—over-luxuriant. **Awful**—sublime. **Austere**—rigid.

571. **Mellow**—soft and ripe ;—a proleptic use of the adjective.

The meaning of the last five lines is—If a man can escape the stings of his own conscience which perpetually torment him, he can find true enjoyment in a scene like this where Nature, by costly blending the sublime and lively, gives that beauty and ripeness to the earth which autumn does to the year.

60

572. **A vain adieu**—Why 'vain' is explained in the next line.

573. **There can be no farewell**—because a scene like this haunts the memory for ever.

574. **The mind is coloured**—the impression produced on the mind is permanent. **Thy every hue**—every single feature of thy beauty.

575. **The eyes resign their cherished gaze**—*i.e.*, if one is obliged to leave the place.

576. **It is with the thankful heart of parting praise**—one can only do so after paying you a last tribute of compliment and gratitude.

577. **Mighty**—grand. **Rise**—appear to one's view. **Glaring**—brilliant.

578. **Unite**—combine. **In one attaching maze**—in one charming scene.

579. **Glories of old days**—'the charm of historical associations.'

The meaning is :—I may see a grander scene, or a more brilliant scene, but none that combines in one the various charms of brilliance, beauty, and softness with the charm of historical associations.

61

581. **Negligently grand**—natural grandeur. **Fruitful bloom** abundance of flowers.

582. **Of coming ripeness**—foreshadowing a rich harvest. **Sheen**—glitter.

583. **The rolling stream**—the full flowing Rhine. **Precipice**—rock; hill. **Gloom**—darkness.

584. **Gothic walls between**—ruins of castles built in the Gothic style of architecture peeping through the forest.

585. **As**—as if.

586. **In mockery of man's art**—in imitation of the towers made by human skill. **These withal**—together with these.

587. **Faces**—people. **Happy as the scene**—as cheerful as the surrounding scenery in the midst of which they live.

588. **Whose**—refers to the 'scene,' not to 'faces'. **Fertile bounties**—rich fertility. **Extend to all**—"are enjoyed by peasants as well as by nobles." (T.)

589. **Still spring o'er thy banks**—the crops continue to grow along the banks of the Rhine. **Though Empires near them fall**—regardless of the political changes that might be going on in the neighbouring kingdoms (of France and Germany). Probably a reference to the Napoleonic wars.

62

590. **But these recede**—I leave the Rhine country. 'Recede' here means 'are left behind.'

591. **The palaces of Nature**—the abode of the grandest natural scenery. **Vast walls**—immense sides.

592. **Pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps**—are crowned with lofty snow-clad peaks rising high into the clouds.

593. **Throned Eternity in icy halls**—whose snow-covered valleys seem emblems of eternity, that is, they appear unchanging for ever.

594. **Of cold sublimity**—snow-clad and sublime.

595. **Avalanche**—a mass of snow rolling down the slopes of a mountain. **The thunderbolt of snow**—a sudden, swift, and destructive mass of snow hurled from above.

596. **Expands the spirit**—elevates the soul. **Appals**—strikes awe into the heart.

597. **Gather around these summits**—are collected round these Alpine peaks. **As to show**—as if to prove.

598. **Pierce to Heaven**—rise as high as heaven. **Yet leave vain man below**—without causing a corresponding elevation in the character of man who may remain as ignoble as before.

The meaning of the last three lines is :—The Alpine peaks in their loftiness and sublimity have the effect of elevating the soul, and striking awe into the heart, as if to demonstrate the fact that the earth may rise as high as heaven while man may remain as ignoble a creature as ever.

63

599. **These matchless heights**—the incomparable Alps. **Scan**—climb.

600. Supply 'which' before 'should not.' **Passed in vain**—left unvisited.

601. **Morat**—a village in the canton of Freiburg, Switzerland, famous for the battle (fought on June 9, 1476) in which the Swiss defeated Charles the Bold Duke of Burgundy. **Proud**—*i.e.*, of which the Swiss are proud. **The patriot field**—the battle-field where the Swiss fought for national independence.

602. **Ghastly trophies of the slain**—the bones of those who were killed in the battle.

603. **Nor blush**—without feeling ashamed, because the Swiss were fighting to save their country from becoming a province of Burgundy.

604. **Bequeathed**—left. **Tombless host**—the unburied dead.

605. **A bony heap**—a heap of bones. It is said that after the battle, 15,000 dead bodies were left on the field. When Byron visited the place the bones were still unburied. But in 1822 they were duly buried, and an obelisk set up to mark the spot. **Through ages to remain**—the heap of bones lay exposed for 346 years—from 1476 to 1822, hence 'ages'.

606. **Themselves their monument**—the heap of bones lying on the fields constituting a kind of memorial for the battle. **Stygian coast**—the banks of the river Styx in the lower world, where the souls of those whose bodies were unburied were believed to be unable to cross on their way to the abodes of the dead.

607. **Unsepulchred**—because their bodies were unburied. **Shrieked each wandering ghost**—It was also believed that the souls of the dead, which were unable to cross the Styx, shrieked for pain, and wandered about restlessly till the rites of burial were properly performed.

64

608. **Cannae**—the great battle in the second Punic War, 216 B.C., in which the Carthaginian general, Hannibal, defeated the Romans. The slaughter on the Roman side was 70,000. Cannae is in south Italy, near the mouth of the river Ofanto. **Carnage**—slaughter. **Vies with**—rivals; *i.e.*, is of the same nature as.

609. **Marathon**—the great battle in the Second Persian War, 409 B.C., in which the Athenians defeated the huge Persian force sent by Darius for the conquest of Greece. **Twin names**—names that will be pronounced together.

To Byron, Waterloo and Cannae were types of bloody

battles fought for political supremacy. Morat and Marathon were patriotic battles fought in defence of popular liberty, and hence more commendable.

610. **Stainless**—fought for a cause truly noble.

611. **The unambitious heart and head**—the people—and not ambitious princes.

612. **Proud**—who would not yield to a tyrant. **Brotherly**—ready to help one another. **Civic band**—a band of free citizens—not mercenary soldiers.

613. **Unbought**—not hired for the occasion. **In no princely cause of vice-entailed corruption**—to fight for the maintenance of some prince's corrupted and despotic rule. **They no land doomed**—they inflicted upon no country.

615. **Bewail**—mourn. **Blasphemy**—rigor or injustice ; 'blasphemy' is properly the sin of attributing to men what only belongs to God.

616. **Making kings' rights divine**—enacting that kings ruled by right derived directly from God, and that they were not responsible to any earthly being. **Draconic**—severe. Draco was the author of the first written code of laws made at Athens in 621 B.C. His laws were so severe that they were said to have been 'written in blood,' because he made death the penalty for almost every offence.

Explanation.—Stanza 64.—While Waterloo should be placed on a level with Cannae, because both were bloody battles fought for political supremacy, Morat should be pronounced in the same breath with Marathon, because these two battles were fought in defence of national liberty. They were battles truly glorious, fought for truly noble objects, by the free citizens of a country, and not battles brought on by ambitious princes for the ignoble object of territorial aggrandisement, and fought by mercenary soldiers paid to shed their blood for the maintenance of some prince's corrupted and despotic rule. These victories did not inflict upon any country the misery of laws decreeing kings to rule by right derived from God and to be responsible to no earthly being ;

on the contrary, they helped to maintain their national independence.

65

617. **Lone**—solitary ; standing by itself. **A—lonelier column**—a solitary pillar, the only one left standing of the ruins of Aventicum, the ancient capital of Helvetia. It is very near Morat, and was erected to commemorate the self-sacrifice of Julia Alpinula.

617, 18. **Rears a gray and grief-worn aspect of old days**—stands in sorrowful witness of the past.

619. **The last remnant of the work of years**—the only thing left standing amidst the ruin of the city which has been caused by time.

620. **Wild-bewildered**—lit. 'lost in the woods,' hence extremely puzzled.'

621. **To stone converted by amaze**—suddenly changed to stone through extreme wonder ; petrified.

622. **Yet still with consciousness**—but still looking as if it felt its loneliness.

623. **Making a marvel that it not decays**—making us wonder why it does not fall in ruins.

624. **The coeval pride of human hands**—the stately buildings of Aventicum, which were of the same date as this column.

625. **Levelled**—sc. with the ground ; lying in ruins. **Hath strewn her subject lands**—lie scattered over the country of which it was once the capital.

66

626. **Sweet and sacred be the name**—may her memory be ever honoured !

627. **Julia**—Julia Alpinula, a young princess of Aventicum, who died at the age of 23 after a vain attempt to save her father, Julius Alpinula, the leader of the Helvetii, who

was put to death, in A.D. 69, by Caecina, a Roman general, because he and his people refused to acknowledge the authority of the Emperor Vitellius.

628. **Gave, her youth to Heaven**—sacrificed her young life in a noble cause.

629. **Beneath a claim nearest to Heaven's**—"under the weight of filial affection." (T.) **Broke o'er a father's grave**—she died in sorrow caused by her father's death.

630. **Justice is sworn against tears**—judges are unable by their oaths to listen to any pathetic appeals on the part of suitors.

630, 31. **Hers would crave the life she lived in**—her object was to beg for the life of her father who was everything to her. **The judge was just**—sc. not merciful.

632. **On him**—for the sake of him.

633. **Without a bust**—with no memorial erected over it.

634. **Held within their urn one mind, etc.**—father and daughter were buried in the same grave, because they were one in love.

67

635. **Which should not pass away**—which should never be forgotten.

636. **Wither**—be forgotten.

637. **With a just decay**—"allowing them to perish from memory as they deserve.'' (T.)

638. **The enslavers and the enslaved**—the conquerors and conquered alike.

639. **The high, the mountain-majesty of worth**—genuine worth, which is high, rather mountain-high, in dignity ; *i.e.*, the memory of a person who has done a deed of genuine *goodness*, which is more worthy of commemoration than any deed of mere *greatness* can be.

640. **Should be**—deserves to be. **Shall**—is bound to be. **Survivor of its woe**—remembered after the sacrifice is past. The memory of a golden deed shall outlast the suffering that led to it.

641. **From its immortality**—being of undying fame. **Look forth in the sun's face**—appear, when revealed to the world.

642. **Like yonder Alpine snow**—like the eternal snows of the Alps.

N.B.—The word 'yonder' suggests, what was a fact, that Byron wrote these lines in sight of the Alps. Byron himself tells us in a note to this line—"This was written in the eye of Mont Blanc, which even at this distance dazzles mine."

The points of comparison that Byron was thinking of between the dazzling lustre of the Alpines now and filial affection are :—(1) that it gains glory from the light of day ; (2) that its purity is imperishable.

643. **Imperishably pure**—unalloyed with any base motive, and undying. **Beyond all things below**—more than any earthly object.

The meaning of the last five lines is :—The memory of a deed of genuine goodness is everlasting. It is bound, as it deserves, to outlast the pain that attended the sacrifice. It is of undying fame, and when revealed to the world, gains fresh glory, which is purer than any earthly object can ever be.

68

644. **Lake Leman**—the French name for the Lake of Geneva. **Woos**—attracts. **Crystal face**—clear and sparkling surface.

645. **The mirror etc.**—*i.e.*, the lake reflects the image of the stars and mountains.

646. **The stillness of their aspect**—their tranquil appearance. **In each trace of their far height and hue**—in every detail of their distance and colour.

648. **Too much of man**—too much of busy human activity. **To look through**—for me to be able to see clearly.

649. **With a fit mind**—with appropriate feelings. **Might**—sublime objects.

That is—Here I am disturbed too much by human society to be able to enjoy the sight of the sublime objects I see here with appropriate feelings. Had I gazed upon this noble scene in solitude, I should have been inspired with sublime thoughts and feelings, which do not come to me in tue midst of busy activity.

650. **Loneliness**—solitude. **Renew**—revive.

651. **Hid**—suppressed. **Cherished**—dearly loved.

652. **Mingling with the herd**—mixing with society. **Penned me in their fold**—narrowed my thoughts and feelings and dragged them down to the level of theirs.

The meaning of the last three lines is:—But I soon hope to escape from the haunts of men, and then in solitude I shall again indulge in thoughts and feelings which I have as dearly loved as before, but which I could not express when in the midst of human beings, for mixing in the society of ordinary men narrowed my thoughts and feelings and dragged them down to the level of theirs.

69

653. **Fly from**—avoid the society of. **Need not be**—does not necessarily mean.

654. **Stir and toil**—struggle and labour.

655. **To keep the mind deep in its fountain**—to keep our thoughts to ourselves ; to be reticent and reserved.

656. **Overboil**—become too excited.

657. **Hot throng**—busy crowd of men. **Become the spoil of**—are ruined by.

658. **Our infection**—the vices we imbibe through social

intercourse. **Too late**—when it is too late to remedy the evil done.

659. **May**—will perhaps. **Deplore**—repent. **Struggle with**—try to shake off. **The coil**—the vices we have acquired which cling to us like fetters.

660. **In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong**—by meanly trying to avenge ourselves on society for the wrong done to us.

661. **Contentious world**—a world of competition and struggle. **Where none are strong**—in which all are equally weak.

Explanation.—Stanza 69.—We live in a world of competition and keen struggle, from which we may endeavour to escape, not because we *hate* our fellow-men, but because we merely wish to *avoid* them, which is totally different. There are some people naturally unfit for the bustle and activity of life. A habit of reserve and aloofness need not therefore imply dissatisfaction with life, but may merely indicate an effort on our part to escape from the feverish excitement of living in the midst of the busy crowd. For in the society of man we may contract vices which may ruin us, and for which we may have cause to repent when it is too late to shake off the evil by meanly trying to avenge ourselves on society for the wrongs done to us.

70

662. **There**—in society. **In a moment**—in a moment of error. **Plunge our years in fatal penitence**—incur lifelong repentance.

663. **In the blight of our own soul**—by ruining our character.

664. **Turn all our blood to tears**—make our life essentially a life of sorrow.

665. **Things to come**—all our future. **Colour with hues of Night**—darken with remorse.

666. **The race of life**—life, which offers to men such splendid chances of distinction. **A hopeless flight**—a vain struggle to escape from the stings of their own conscience.

667. **Those that walk in darkness**—those who are victims of remorse.

668. **The boldest**—the boldest navigators. **Steer but where their ports invite**—sail only where there are harbours to receive them.

669. **Wanderers o'er Eternity**—man destined for ever to lead an aimless life.

670. **Bark**—ship. **Drives on and on**—sails continually forward. **Anchored ne'er shall be**—without ever finding a haven of rest.

Explanation.—Stanza 70.—In the society of man we may in a moment of error, do something which may bring on lifelong repentance, and by ruining our character, make our life essentially a life of sorrow, darkening all our future with remorse. Life, which to others offers such splendid chances of distinction, becomes, to men who are victims of remorse, a vain struggle to escape from the stings of their own conscience. The boldest navigators only sail where there are harbours to receive them ; but there are others who are destined for ever to lead an aimless existence, without a single definite object in their life.

71

671. **Alone**—aloof from mankind.

672. **Only for its earthly sake**—apart from man ; only because we are creatures of the earth.

673. **By**—beside. **Blue**—The colour of the waters of the Rhone, as it flows out of the Lake of Geneva, is deep blue. **Arrowy**—swift-flowing. **Rhone**—a river of France and Switzerland falling into the Mediterranean. It is the most rapid river in Europe.

674. **Pure bosom**—clear surface. **Its nursing lake**—Lake Geneva from which the river draws its supply of waters.

676. **Froward**—naughty. **Doth make her own care**—fondles.

677. **Kissing its cries away**—hushing its cries with kisses. **These awake**—she begins to cry.

The Rhone, before it joins the Lake of Geneva, flows in a rapid bounding current ; but its waters become still again as they flow through the lake. As such it is compared to a naughty child who cries peevishly and is hushed by its mother's soft kisses.

678. **Thus**—in solitude. **Wear**—pass.

679. **Crushing**—jostling ; struggling. **Doomed to inflict or bear**—destined to do or suffer harm.

That is, it is far better to live a life of retirement than to take part in the affairs of the world where we cannot avoid doing and suffering wrongs.

72

680. **I live not in myself**—my life is not an individualized life.

681. **Portion of that around me**—a part of Nature in the midst of which I live.

682. **A feeling**—"a source of emotion and sympathy." (T). **The hum of human cities**—the noise and bustle of life; "the din of the crowded town." (K.) **Torture**—*i.e.*, it is painful to me.

685. **A link reluctant in a fleshly chain**—a member of the order of created beings—against my will.

686. **Classed among creatures**—reckoned as one of the animal creation. **Flee**—escape from the body.

687. **Heaving plain**—undulating surface.

688. **Mingle**—become identified. **Not in vain**—with advantage to myself; with the result that my soul will be elevated thereby.

The meaning of the stanza is:—I am not an individual self, but a part of surrounding Nature, which is a source to me of emotion and sympathy. The only thing I hate is to be a living human being, when my soul can very well escape from the bondage of the body and hold intercourse with Nature and become nobler and purer thereby.

73

689. **Absorbed**—lost in my surroundings. **Life**—true life.

690. **The peopled desert**—the society of man, which to Byron is a solitary waste, because his soul is alone there among a crowd, with whom he is not in sympathy. **Past**—*i.e.*, in the midst of which I lately dwelt.

692. **To sorrow I was cast**—I was obliged to live in misery.

693. **Act and suffer**—to inflict and bear pain. **Remount**—*i.e.*, resume my course of life.

694. **With a fresh opinion**—with new vigour and energy. **Feel to spring**—feel rising within me.

695. **Though young**—though this vigour and energy is new to me. **Waxing**—growing. **Blast**—lit, 'storm' ; hence, violent disorders.

696. **Cope with**—attempt to overcome ; meet ; oppose. **On delighted wing**—cheerfully.

697. **Spurning**—despising; breaking away from. **Clay-cold bonds**—the restraints imposed upon the soul by the body. **Round our being cling**—hinder the development of the soul's higher faculties.

Explanation.—Stanza 73.—By mingling my soul with nature, I become lost in my surroundings, and this is what I call true life. The society of man, with which my soul has

nothing in sympathy, and from which it has just escaped, seems now a place of torture, where I was for a time doomed to do my part of action and suffering. But now I have started upon a nobler course of life, with new vigour and energy, which I feel rising within myself. And though this energy is still new, it is sufficiently developed for me to be able to overcome the violent disorders I seek to put down. For this energy gives my spirit cheerfulness, and enables it to break away from the restraints imposed upon it by the body which hinders the development of the soul's higher faculties.

74

698. **Mind**—here='soul.' **All free**=totally free.

699. **What it hates in this degraded form**—its present hateful state when it is lodged in a body.

700, **Reft of its carnal life**—separated from its bodily existence. **Save what shall be existent happier in the fly and worm**—except that part of my soul which will pass into the lower creation and there live a happier life than it did in a human body.

702. **When elements to elements conform**—when each element of the body goes back to that to which it is most akin in nature.

N.B.—This refers to the old belief in the four elements which composed the human body—earth, air, fire, and water.

703. **Dust is as it should be**—the material part of me turns to dust of which it was made.

704. **Less dazzling but more warm**—not so fair as when seen from outside, but more in sympathy, more real, as being part of myself.

705. **Bodiless thought**—In his present state, when his soul is lodged in a body, he can feel a thought only *through* the bodily organs ; when his soul is emancipated from the body he will *see* a thought directly, independently of the body.

The spirit of each spot—Byron believed that all natural objects are presided over by a spirit of their own. In his bodily state he cannot see this spirit ; but in his emancipated state he will.

706. **Even now**—even in this bodily state. **Share the immortal lot**—partake of the eternal life which the soul will lead after separation from the body.

The general sense of the stanza is :—When at last my soul comes to be completely emancipated from the bondage of sense ; when it will escape from its low lot by severing its connection with the flesh, (except that part of it which will pass into the lower creation and there live a happier life than it did when lodged in a human body) ; when the perishable part of me has perished; then I shall become a part of what is now exterior to me, feel more in sympathy with objects of external nature, which may not then appear so fair as when viewed from outside. I shall then be able to see Thought *directly* and not as I now feel it—*through* the bodily organs. I shall also then see the presiding spirit of each scene, which in this bodily state I cannot. Even in my present unemancipated state I sometimes anticipate the eternal life which my soul will lead hereafter.

75

707, 8. **Are not the mountains......them ?**—*i.e.*, is not all nature one with me : and am I not one with nature ?

709, 10. **Is not the love......passion ?**—do I not bear a strong pure love for nature ? **Contemn**—despise.

711. **Stem a tide of suffering**—save myself from infinite pain (by communing with Nature).

712. **Forego**—give up.

713. **Such feelings**—this pure happiness. **For**—in exchange for. **Hard and worldly phlegm**—cold indifference.

N.B.—The word 'phlegm' contains an allusion to the old belief that a man's character depended upon the predominance of any one of certain fluids found in the body—choler, melan-

choly, phlegm, etc. Those having a predominance of phlegm were supposed to have a sluggish temperament.

714. **Whose eyes are turned below**—who care only for worldly pursuits.

715. **Gazing upon the ground**—concerning themselves with mean and low things. **Which dare not glow**—which are incapable of becoming noble.

The idea of the stanza is :—Nature loves me, and I love nature, compared with which I despise everything else. My love for nature enables me to save myself from infinite pain and to enjoy infinite happiness. I will not give up this noble enjoyment, and bear instead the cold indifference of worldly-minded men engrossed in ignoble pursuits and in ignoble thoughts.

76

716. **My theme**—the subject of my poem.

Cf. the other phrases with which Byron leaves a digression and resumes his narrative "Stop," "Away with these," "Something too much of this," etc.

717. **That which is immediate**—the subject in hand—reflections on the Lake of Geneva. **Require**—ask.

718. **Find contemplation in the urn**—find matter for reflection in the monuments of the dead.

719. **One**—*viz.*, Rousseau. **Whose dust was once all fire**—who, when alive, was full of passionate feeling.

720. **The land where I respire**—the place where I now am—Geneva.

721. **A passing guest**—I am a temporary resident, only a traveller passing through the country.

722. **Became a being**—was born.

723. **Quest**—aspiration.

724. **The which to gain and keep**—in order to win glory and to retain it.

77

725. **Self-torturing**—because he was of a suspicious character. **Sophist**—see note to line 382. **Wild**—because he entertained extravagant notions about man and society.

Rousseau—Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was born at Geneva, of French parents. His most famous works are *La Nouvelle Heloise*, a novel about the love of a man of low birth for a lady of rank, the *Canfessions* which are a kind of autobiography, and the *Social Contract*, which contains his views on society.

726. **Apostle of affliction**—the leading exponent of the beauty of sorrow. **Threw enchantment over passion**—made passion look attractive. "His fallacious teaching, enforced by a fascinating eloquence, provided no discipline for the passions, but supplied them with specious texts and sonorous maxims. Hence he is here said to have thrown enchantment over passions." (K.)

728. **Woe**—pain and suffering. **Wrung**—drew forth. **Overwhelming**—masterly.

729. **First drew the breath which made him wretched**—began his life which was subsequently so unhappy. **Yet**—*i.e.*, though his own sorrow made him wretched.

730. **How to make madness beautiful**—to represent bautifully the violent forms of sorrow.

731. **Cast**—threw. **Erring deeds and thoughts**—vicious acts and sentiments (such as illicit love.) **A heavenly hue of words**—the charm of beautiful language.

732. **Dazzling as they past the eyes**—fascinating the reader.

733. **Over them**—*i.e.*, as he read his works. **Feelingly**—sympathetically. **Fast**—copiously.

Byron's estimate of Rousseau's character is as follows:—He was a man of a suspicious character, and this made him miserable ; a false reasoner in his teachings ; a leading exponent of the beauty of sorrow, which he described with masterly eloquence. Though wretched in himself, he could represent the varicus forms of sorrow so beautifully, and

describe vicious acts and sentiments (such as illicit love) in such a fine language that the reader was charmed and unable to perceive anything immoral in his stories.

78

734. **Passion's essence**—all possion; passion concentrated, without its external accompaniments.

735. **Ethereal flame**—heavenly fire, *i.e.*, ideal love.

736. **Kindled**—inspired. **Blasted**—ruined. **For to be thus and enamoured were in him the same**—for to be in love meant death to him, *i.e.*, he was of such a strongly passionate nature that to fall in love meant for him to be burnt by love.

738. **His**—his love. **Living dame**—any real woman.

739. **Who rise upon our dreams**—whom we continue to love even after death.

740. **Ideal beauty**—beauty in the abstract, or perfect beauty, which exists only in thought, not in real life. **Which became in him existence**—which took shape in his imagination and became like a living being.

741. **Overflowing**—in an exaggerated form. **Teems along**—is abundantly manifested through.

742. **Burning page**—passionate writing. **Distempered**—morbid.

79

743. **This**—this ideal love. **Breathed itself to life**—was typified in the character of. **Julie**—the heroine of Rousseau's novel, *La Nouvelle Heloise.*

744. **Invested her**—adorned her character. **Wild**—romantic. **Sweet**—lovely.

745. **Hallowed**—made it pure and holy. **The memorable kiss which every morn etc.**—"This refers to the account, in his *Confessions*, of his passion for the Countess d' Houdetot,

and his long walk every morning for the sake of the single kiss which was the common salutation of French acquaintance."—*Byron's note.*

746. **Fevered**—passionate.

747. **Hers**—her lip. **Who but with friendship his would meet**—who used to return Rousseau's kiss with a friendly kiss of her own.

748. **Through brain and breast**—through his whole frame.

749. **Flashed**—*i.e.*, he felt. **Thrilled**—inspired with love. **Love-devouring heat**—intense passion. **But to that gentle touch......heat**—but that soft kiss was enough to fill his whole body with intense passion.

750. **Absorbing sigh**—a sigh that completely filled the heart. **Blest**—happy.

751. **Vulgar minds**—ordinary people. **With all they seek possesst**—with the possession of all they desire.

That is, Rousseau perhaps felt more happy in the indulgence of a sigh of love than ordinary people do in the possession of all they desire.

80

752. **One long war**—a continued struggle. **Self-sought foes**—people whom he had himself turned into enemies.

753. **Self-banished**—estranged ; whom he had driven from his friendship.

754. **Suspicion's sanctuary**—the cherished seat of suspicion.

N.B.—Rousseau was morbidly suspicious of his friends, and involved himself in constant quarrels with them. For example, he quarrelled with Diderot, Voltaire, Hume, and others, merely on account of groundless suspicion. Latterly this feeling caused him to think that other people were plotting against him, and produced misanthropy.

755. **For its own cruel sacrifice**—as victims, *i.e.*, as objects of his suspicion. **The kind**—the human race.

756. **'Gainst whom he raged**—whom he attacked and denounced. **Fury strange**—curious anger. **Blind**—unreasoning ; indiscriminate.

757. **Phrenzied**—of unsound mind. **Therefore who may know**—no one can guess the cause of his madness.

758. **Since cause might be...find**—for his madness might have been caused by something which medical skill could never discover.

759. **Phrenzied**—driven to madness. **Disease or woe**—bodily disease or mental trouble.

760. **Worst pitch of all**—"that dangerous extreme madness." (T.) **Which bears a reasoning show**—"which is concealed under a semblance of sanity." (T.)

81

761. **Inspired**—filled with prophetic inspiration. **From him came**—he gave utterance to.

762. **The Pythian's mystic cave of yore**—the Delphic oracle in ancient Greece, where a priestess, called the Pythia, made prophetic utterances which were believed to have been inspired by the god Apollo.

763. **Oracles**—doctrines which were accepted as God's truth by the people. **Set the world in flame**—powerfully stirred the strongest passions of men.

764. **Nor ceased to burn**—and continued to excite men. **Till kingdoms were no more**—till the French monarchy was swept away and a republic set up in its place.

NOTE.—The reference is to Rousseau's influence in bringing about the French Revolution. This was due to the attractiveness of the views which he propounded in his *Social Contract*, in which he maintained the natural equality of all men, and denounced the conditions of society as unjust.

765. **Did he not this for France ?**—he certainly did this good service to his country. **Before**—formerly ; prior to Rousseau's time.

766. **Lay bowed to the inborn tyranny of years**—was subjected to a despotic government for years past.

767. **Broken**—crushed. **Trembling**—enfeebled. **To the yoke she bore**—by its oppressive government.

768. **Till**—till she was. **Him**—Rousseau. **Compeers**—associates, *viz.*, Diderot, D'Alember, Voltaire, and the other contributors to the *Encyclopedia*.

769. **Too much wrath**—extreme ferocity. **To too much wrath which follows overgrown fears**—to commit the cxcesses of the French Revolution which were caused by the excessive sense of danger felt by the people and their leaders.

82

770. **They**—the French people of the Revolution period. **Made themselves a fearful monument**—immortalised themselves in the terrible French Revolution.

771. **Wreck of old opinions**—wholesale destruction of established customs and institutions. **Things**—beliefs and ideas. **Grew**—developed.

772. **Breathed from the birth of time**—had existed from the beginning of the world.

N.B.—The phrase suggests that those beliefs and ideas had nourished successive generations of Frenchmen from times immemorial—like the air they breathed.

The veil they rent—*i.e.*, the ancient respect for immemorial usage, the veneration for the past, which had hitherto served to guard old institutions, and which was done away with by the Revolution.

773. **What behind it lay**—*i.e.*, the real worth of those ancient forms and institutions. **All earth shall view**—*i.e.*, they exposed it to the world.

774. **But good with ill they also overthrew**—The French Revolution swept off everything which was old, regardless whether it was beneficial or harmful : its work was entirely destructive.

775. **Leaving but ruins**—with the result of creating a chaotic state of society. **Wherewith to rebuild upon the same foundation**—out of which they began to evolve a new order of things upon the existing basis.

776. **And renew dungeons and thrones which,** etc.—On July 14th, 1789, the Revolutionists destroyed the great French prison, the Bastile ; but they soon *refilled* the prisons with their own victims. Similarly they abolished monarchy by beheading their king, Louis XVI; but this was soon followed by the empire of Napoleon. The rusult thus was the renewal of dungeons and thrones.

778. **Because ambition was self-willed**—because the Revolutionists, with all their doctrines of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," were actuated by the same selfish ambition which they had rebelled against in their kings and nobles.

Explanation.—Stanza 85.—The French have immortalized themselves in the horrors of the French Revolution, They carried on a wholesale destruction of ancient customs and institutions, which had nourished Frenchmen of successive generations from times immemorial, and thus exposed to the world their real worth. But in their eager wish to sweep off everything old, they destroyed some really beneficial institutions as well. Society was thus left in a state of chaos, out of which they began to evolve a new order of things. But this caused a reaction which brought back the old tyranny soon after: the destroyed Bastile giving place to similar other prisons filled with the victims of popular fury, and the destroyed monarchy of the Bourbons replaced by the empire of Napoleon, not long afterwards. And this was because the Revolutionists, with all their doctrines of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," were actuated by the same selfish ambition which they had rebelled against in their kings and nobles.

83

779. **But this**—*viz.*, the renewal of tyranny. **Endure**—last long. **Endured**—tolerated.

780. **Felt their strength**—tasted power. **Made it felt**—made the nobility feel their strength, *viz.*, in the Reign ef Terror.

781. **Used it better**—employed their power in establishing a better form of government, and not in deluging the country with blood. **Allured by their new vigour**—tempted by their newly acquired strength.

782. **Sternly have they dealt on one another**—they carried on a merciless slaughter of their fellow-men.

783. **Melt**—feel for the wrongs of others.

784. **With her once natural charities**—with her wonted instinctive tendderness. **They**—the Revolutionists.

785. **Who in oppression's darkness caved had dwelt**—who had so long borne the misery of a despotic government.

786. **They were not eagles nourished with the day**—*i.e.*, they were only ordinary men with no previous political education. The eagle is believed to possess the power of looking directly at the sun without being blinded, because he is trained from his birth to gaze at the sun—"nourished with the day."

787. **What marvel then**—it was quite natural, therefore. **Mistook their prey**—*i.e.*, acted wrongly in the exercise of their power.

Explanation.—Stanza 83.—But it is impossible that this renewal of tyranny in the establishment of the empire of Napoleon should last or be tolerated for any length of time. For the French have now tasted power, though in the Revolution they could have made a nobler exercise of it than by deluging the country with blood. But their new consciousness of strength made them carry on a merciless slaughter of their fellow-men. And this was quite natural too. For the

Revolutionists, being but ordinary men, with no previous political education, and having so long borne the mi.ery of a despotic government, were naturally driven to those excesses which undid all their work.

84

788. **Deep wounds**—*i.e.*, violent commotions. **Closed**—terminated. **Without a scar**—without leaving some trace behind.

789. **The heart's**—*sc.* wounds, *i.e.* outrage caused to one's feelings, that is disappointment. **Bleed**—cause pain. **But heal to wear**—though they heal they leave behind.

790. **That which disfigures it**—a scar.

791. **War with their own hopes**—hope against hope. **Vanquished**—disappointed. **Bear silence but not submission**—make no protest, but do not yield. **Lair**—den. Passion is compared to a ferocious beast.

792. **Fix'd Passion**—determined revenge. **Holds his breath**—broods over its wrong. **The hour**—the time for revenge.

793. **Atone for years**—made amends for continued wrongs. **None need despair**—all men get an opportunity of revenge one day.

794. **It came, it cometh, it will come**—"throughout all history—past, present and future—there is a time of retribution." (T.) **It**—stands for "the power to punish or forgive."

795. **In one**—*i.e.*, in forgiveness.

Explanation.—Stanza 84.—Every violent commotion ends in leaving a permanent effect behind. But a shock to human feelings is more violent, more painful, more lasting in its effects than any other kind of commotion. Thus, the late convulsions in France have left their mark upon the French constitution, though political tranquillity has been restored in the country ; and the Revolutionists, whose hopes have been disappointed in the struggle, remember their wrongs, and though they seem to have quietly acquiesced

in the new order of things, are really waiting for an opportunity of avenging themselves on their foes. For throughout all history—past, present, and future—there is a time of retribution ; and when it comes the vengeance will be terrible.

85

797. **Placid**—calm. **The contrasted lake with the wild world**—This is a curious construction for—'thy lake when contrasted with the wild world.'

800. **Earth's troubled waters**—the toils and turmoils of life. **A purer spring**—*i. e.*, a more peaceful existence.

801. **Quiet sail**—peaceful boating excursion. The poet here imagines himself as sailing on the lake in a boat.

802. **Waft me from distraction**—make me forget the vexatious cares of the world.

803. **Torn**—stormy. **Thy**—refers to Lake Leman.

804. **Reproved**—reproached.

805. **Steam delights**—exciting forms of pleasure. **Moved with**—fond of.

The calm beauty of the lake makes him wonder how he could ever have been fond of the wild grandeur of the stormy sea.

86

806. **Hush**—silence. **All between thy margin and the mountains**—*i e.*, all the details of the landscape.

807. **Dusk yet clear**—enveloped in the faint light of evening which, however distinctly, reveals every object.

808. **Mellowed**—softened. The dim twilight subdues and softens the colours of objects.

Mingling—*i.e.*, the outlines of things blended with one another, so that it was difficult exactly to demarcate between one object and another.

809. **Jura**—a peak of the Alps to the west of the lake of Geneva. **Capt heights**—clouded summits.

810. **Precipitously steep**—perpendicularly tall. This was because the slopes are concealed in the dim light.

Drawing near—as we approach the margin.

811. **Breathes**—is borne by the breeze. **Living fragrance**—sweet smell of flowers in bloom.

812. **Yet fresh with childhood**—just beginning to blossom. **On the ear-drops**—we hear.

813. **The light drip of the suspended oar**—the sound of the water-drops gently trickling down from oars of the boat, as they are drawn up from the water. Byron's party had stopped the boat to enjoy the deep calm, which was disturbed only by the gentle dripping of water from the oars, or the chirp of the grasshopper.

814. **Carol**—song. **One good-night carol more**—The chirping of the grasshopper is spoken of as a song which he sings immediately before retiring for the night.

Prof. Tozer remarks on the above stanza :—"The description here is all the more picturesque, because no objects are mentioned in detail; there are clear outlines, and subdued lights and shadows, except towards the west, where the contrast with the sunset lights makes the mountain-sides appear darker, and consequently steeper, from the slopes being concealed."

87

815. **He**—the grasshopper. **An evening reveller**—an insect who spends the evening in merry-making. **Makes his life an infancy**—enjoys himself as gaily as an infant.

816. **Sings his fill**—sings on till he is delighted to his heart's content.

817. **Brakes**—bushes; thickets.

818. **Starts into voice**—suddenly screams out.

819. **A floating whisper**—a faint murmur.

Remarks Prof. Tozer: "There is an exquisite play of the imagination here, in first suggesting a mystic whisper of

Nature, and then negativing the suggestion because of the silence which accompanies the dewfall."

820. **Fancy**—an illusion. **Starlight dews**—dews which form only in clear weather. This is, of course, true to nature.

821. **All**—entirely ; an adverb. **Their tears of love instil**—*i. e.*, are forming. The dew-drops are spoken of as tears of love.

822. **Weeping themselves away**—exhausting their moisture.

823. **Spirit of her hues**—the essence of the various colours we find in nature.

The dew is here said to impart Nature the essence of the various colours which manifest themselves in the various beautiful objects of nature—flowers, birds, beasts, etc.

88

824. **The poetry of heaven**—heavenly objects which inspire man with poetic thoughts and feelings.

825. **Your bright leaves**—your bright shapes. The stars are here represented as forming a book of fate. **Read**—interpret.

826. **'Tis to be forgiven**—we may be pardoned. The belief in astrology is an offence in the eyes of orthodoxy.

828. **O'erleap their mortal state**—transgress beyond the limits of their earthly nature, claiming relation with heavenly bodies (the stars).

831. **From afar**—from the lofty height at which you shine.

832. **Have named themselves a star**—are each figuratively called a star. Thus we speak of "his star being in the ascendant"; "thank your stars"; "born under an evil star," and so on Byron himself has compared fame to a star in line 95 (stanza 11).

Explanation. Stanza 88—The stars are heavenly objects which inspire man with poetic thoughts and feelings. If in our ambition for worldly greatness we come to entertain a belief in astrology and try to interpret the destinies of individuals and nations by references to the influence of stars, we may be pardoned for thus transgressing the limits of our earthly nature by claiming relation with those heavenly bodies. For the mysterious beauty of the stars inspires us with love and awe, so that we have come to call fortune, fame, power, and life each a star.

89

833. **Not in sleep**—not in a state of inactivity. Nature is ceaselessly at work.

834. **Breathless**—enveloped in a calm. **When feeling most**—when overpowered by some strong emotion.

835. **In thoughts too deep**—when absorbed in thoughts too profound for expression.

836. **High host of stars**—host of stars on high.

837. **Lulled**—still. **Mountain-coast**—rocky shore.

838. **All**—the whole landscape. **Concentred in a life intense**—pervaded by an activity too deep to be manifest.

839. **Beam**—a ray of light. **Is lost**—is useless ; serves no purpose.

840. **Hath a part of being**—shares this activity. **Sense**—perception ; consciousness.

841. **That**—that power. **Creator and defence**—God Who creates and protects all.

This is, even the meanest object in nature partakes of the life and the energy of God. This is an example of Byron's pantheism.

90

842. **Then**—on such occasions. **Feeling infinite**—the sense of infinitude.

843. **Solitude where we are least alone**—sequestered spots where we commune directly with the whole of Nature. Notice the oxymoron.

844. **A truth**—*viz.*, that in such lonely places we are *least* alone. **Through our being doth melt**—pervades us.

845. **Purifies from self**—frees us from the taint of selfishness ; or, takes away our sense of individuality and merges us in the universal. **Tone**—*i.e.*, an attitude of the mind.

846. **The soul and source of music**—the essence and origin of the harmony which pervades nature. **Makes known**—enables us to realise.

847. **Eternal harmony**—divine harmony, *i.e.*, the harmony or perfection of God.

N.B.—There may be an allusion here to the old Greek notion of the "music of the spheres," that the different heavenly bodies in their revolutions make a music too delicate for mortal ears to hear.

Sheds a charm—has a magical influence upon the mind.

848. **The fabled Cytherea's zone**—Venus, the goddess of love, was called Cytherea, from Cythera, an island to the south of the Peloponnesus, where she was worshipped. It was believed that whoever wore her magic zone or girdle immediately became an object of love and desire.

849. **Disarm**—rob it of its terrors.

850. **Spectre Death**—death which is only an imaginary terror after all.

Had he substantial power to harm—even supposing death to be a real evil.

Explanation. Stanza 90—It is on such occasions that we have a sense of infinitude, which is commonly felt in sequestered spots, because here, though aloof from man, we are in the company of all Nature. This feeling then pervades us and takes away our sense of individuality by merging us in the Universal. This attitude of the mind is the essence and origin of the harmony that pervades nature, and enables us to realize the perfection of God. It has a magical influence

upon us, and converts everything we perceive into a thing of beauty. It robs death of its terrors, supposing that death is a real evil.

91

851. **Not vainly**—not without good reasons. **The early Persians**—the ancient Persians who were fire-worshippers and loved to offer their prayers on mountain-tops.

852. **Altar**—place of worship. **High places**—tops of hills.

853. **Earth-o'ergazing**—lofty.

854. **Fit**—appropriate. **Unwalled**—open on all sides. **Temple**—here used generally for a 'place of worship'. **Seek the Spirit**—worship God.

855. **Shrines upreared of human hands**—temples built by man. **Weak**—a poor form of adoration.

856. **Come**—a word that contains a challenge to those who may differ from the poet in this view.

857. **Columns and idol-dwellings**—columned idol-dwellings, *i.e.*, temples displaying the grandest architectural beauty.

Goth or Greek—These are the two chief styles of European architecture—the former distinguished by its pointed arch, the latter by its square-top openings.

858. **Realms of worship**—stupendous shrines.

859. **Fix on**—confine yourself to. **Fond**—"foolishly valued." **Abodes**—buildings. **Circumscribe**—put a restraint upon.

The meaning is :—The grandest of temples built by man are nothing as compared with the places of worship we find in nature. Do not set any foolish value on any mere building, where your prayers must be said, for prayers in such confined places are apt to be narrow too. Pray, rather, in the open air on the top of mountains, same as the ancient Persians used to do.

92

860. **The sky is changed**—the sky shows sudden signs of an approaching storm. **Such a change**—a most wonderful change it is—from beautiful calm to a terrible storm.

NOTE.—Byron tells us in a note to this line—"The thunderstorm to which these lines refer occurred on June 13, 1816, at midnight. I have seen several more terrible, but none more beautiful.

864. **Rattling.**—echoing with the peals of thunder.

865. **Leaps**—*i.e.*, flashes. **Live**—living ; *i.e.*, bright. **Thunder**—here, 'lightning.'

The lightning flashes sometimes on the top of one hill and again on the top of another, and again another so that it seems to leap from crag to crag.

Not from one lone cloud—The thunder does not seem to be issuing from the sky alone, but from every mountain.

866. **Hath found a tongue**—is echoing and re-echoing the thunder-peals.

867. **Jura**—see notes to line 809. **Answers**—repeats the echoes. **Misty shroud**—the clouds in which it is enveloped.

868. **Joyous Alps**—the Alps loudly resounding with thunder—as if in the act of rejoicing.

The Alps and Jura lie on opposite sides of the Lake of Geneva. As the thunder rumbles over the Alps, Jura at once starts into echoes. This is poetically represented as the Alps joyfully shouting to Jura and Jura promptly replying to the call.

93

870. **Thou wert not sent for slumber**—a night like this should not be passed in sleep.

871. **Thy fierce and far delight**—*i.e.*, let me also enjoy the storm which is a source of joy to you. The word "far" here refers to the extent of the storm.

872. **A portion of the tempest**—Understood "let me be."

873. **Lit lake**—the lake lighted up with the flashes of lightning. **A phosphoric sea**—*like* a vast expanse of the sea-surface glowing with phosphorus, a substance which emits a brilliant white flame.

874. **Big rain**—The drops of rain that fall in a thunder-storm are peculiarly big.

875. **'Tis black**—it is all dark. **Glee**—merriment ; rejoicing.

876. **Loud hills**—hills echoing the loud peals of thunder. **Mountain-mirth**—enjoyment such as befits a mountain ; *e.g.*, a storm.

The mountains echoing with the loud peals of thunder are spoken of here as rejoicing (in their own fierce fashion) over the birth of an earthquake's child. Prof. Tozer remarks on this stanza:"Perhaps the finest thing in this famous passage is the element of Titanic revelry introduced into it".

94

878. **Cleaves his way**—cuts its channel.

879. **Heghts**—cliffs. **Which appear as lovers who have parted**—which appear to have once formed one cliff and to have subsequently split in two.

880. **Whose**—refers to 'hate'. **Mining depths**—deep-seated antipathy. 'Mining'='undermining,' alluding to the effect of hatred in striking at the very root of good-will and affection. **So intervene**—cause such an estrangement between them.

881. **Though broken-hearted**—however repentant they might be.

882. **Thwarted**—opposed.

883. **Very root**—real cause. **Fond rage**—foolish misunderstanding.

884. **Blighted**—ruined. **Bloom**—happiness.

That is, though the quarrel between them might have arisen out of love, it was enough to make them strangers for ever, however repentant they might have been afterwards.

885. **Itself expired**—though the anger had vanished ;—a participial clause. **An age of years**—a whole lifetime.

886. **All winters**—full of misery. **War within themselves to wage**—to indulge in bitter self-reproach.

NOTE.—Notice that the sense of the stanza is incomplete. The simile of the two parted lovers, with which the poet began to describe the twin hills between which the Rhone flows, is spun out into minute details about the cause of the estrangement, the hasty anger, the sudden quarrel, the quick separation, the subsequent remorse, the dogged determination never to re-unite, and the lifelong misery.

Byron himself parted from his wife under circumstances not unlike.

95

887. **Now**—A word that recalls the attention of the reader to the description of the storm. **The quick Rhone**—cf. "arrowy Rhone" (line 673 and note).

888. **Hath ta'en his stand**—has fixed itself. That is, this spot seems to be more severely shaken by the storm than any other.

889. **Many**—sc. storms. **Make their play**—are raging.,

890. **Flying their thunderbolts**—dart their lightnings. **From hand to hand**—to and fro ; backwards and forwards.

N.B.—Notice the peculiar aptness of this phrase in describing lightning. Anyone who has watched the lightning will remember that it generally flashes out in one direction and then flashes back in the opposite direction, as if some one were flinging its flashes *from hand to hand.*

891. **The band**—the many storms.

892. **Forked his lightnings**—chosen to send his forked lightning flashes.

894. **Gaps**—gorges. **As desolation worked**—that have been made by some destructive force.

895. **Hot shaft**—lightning. **Blast**—destroy. **Lurked**—lay concealed.

The meaning is :—The brightest flashes were seen in the gorge separating the twin hills of the Rhone valley. The lightning seems to have deliberately chosen this spot for the scene of its havoc, as being one where nature had already worked havoc in cleaving the hills to form that gorge.

96

897. **A soul**—a sympathetic soul, *viz.*, the poet's own soul.

898. **To make these felt and feeling**—to establish a bond of sympathy between them and me ; or, to make them felt by others and to myself. **May well be**—should naturally be.

890. **Made me watchful**—prevented me from sleeping. **The far roll of your departing voices**—the distant rumble of the subsiding storm.

900. **Knoll**—(more usually *knell*) here means a 'signal'.

901. **Of what in me is sleepless**—to revive my sorrow which always haunts me. **If I rest**—even when I am otherwise at ease.

902. **Ye**—This is incorrect : the form 'ye' is only used in the nominative.

Goal—home ; destination.

903. **Those within the human breast**—the violent and malignant passions that afflict mankind.

904. **Some high nest**—some resting-place on high.

Byron asks : "O tempests, where do you end at last ? Or do you never end, and in that resemble the storms that shake the human breast ? Or is it that you do ultimately find a resting place somewhere on high ?

N.B.—The eagle builds his nest on the top of the loftiest crags.

97

905. **Embody**—give form to. **Unbosom**—give utterance to.

906. **That which is most within me**—my inmost thoughts.

907. **Wreak my thoughts upon expression**—force my thoughts into words. **Throw**—compress.

N.B.—'Wreak' is properly used for revenge alone, but its original meaning is 'to drive'.

909. **All that I would have sought**—my future aims and aspirations. **All seek**—my present aims and aspirations.

910. **Bear, know, feel and yet breathe**—my sufferings, my knowledge, my feelings, which are strong enough to cause my death, but do not.

912. **But as it is**—but since this is not possible. **Unheard**—keeping my thoughts and feelings to myself.

913. **Voiceless**—silent. **Sheathing it as a sword**—confining it to my own bosom, against a possible future opportunity of expressing it. The simile suggests the picture of a man who draws his sword in high rage to revenge himself upon an enemy, but somehow finding it impossibie to satisfy his grudge, puts it up again for some future opportunity.

The meaning of the stanza is :—If I could give form and expression to thoughts and feelings that arise in my heart at this moment, and were able to compress them all

in one word, *Lightning*, I should gladly do so. But since this is impossible I have to keep them confined to my own bosom against a possible future chance of giving vent to them.

The atmospheric disturbance has caused a similar disturbance in the poet's mind, and given rise to wild thoughts and feelings which for their very wildness he is unable to express.

98

914. **The morn is up again**—a bright morning at last succeeds the stormy night.

The dewy morn—cf. Gray—

"Now the golden morn aloft
Waves her dew-bespangled wing."

915. **With breath all incense**—with fragrant breezes.

Cf. Gray again—

"The breezy call of incense-breathing morn."
—*The Elegy.*

With cheek all bloom—with bright sunshine.

NOTE.—The Greeks represented the dawn in the person of Aurora, a rosy maiden, growing ever brighter till she ushers in the boundless day. Byron is here thinking of this ancient personification.

916. **Laughing**—*i.e.*, blowing. **With playful scorn**—lightly.

917. **Living as if earth contained no tomb**—displaying a scene of unmixed and apparently everlasting joy.

918. **Glowing into day**—growing brighter and brighter till day sets in.

919. **Resume**—go back to. **The march of our existence**—our daily duties.

920. **Room**—occasion ; scope. **Food**—fit subjects. **Pass by**—fail to notice.

921. **Much**—many features of the scene. **Give us pause**—restrain us from vice.

N.B.—The last phrase is a quotation from *Hamlet*, III. i :—

> "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must *give us pause*;"

Pondered fittingly—studied in the proper mood.

99

923. **Clarens**—a village near Vevey, on the north east corner of the Lake of Geneva. It is situated in the midst of vineyards, on a slope near the shore, and commands a beautiful view of the lake and the mountains which surround it.

Birthplace of deep Love—a spot peculiarly fitted to call up the emotion of love.

NOTE.—In a note to this stanza, Byron says :—

"It is a scene of the existence of love in its most extended and sublime capacity, and of its participation of its good and of its glory......If Rousseau had never lived, the same associations would nonetheless have belonged to such scenes."

Thine air......passionate thought—the very atmosphere of Clarens is laden with love.

925. **Thy trees take root in Love**—the very soil is made of love.

926. **Glaciers**—such as that of the Dent du Midi—which has been described by Rousseau in his *Nouvella Heloise*.

Have his colours caught—glow with the glow of love.

927. **Sunset into rose-hues sees them wrought**—the

Alpine snows glow beautifully in the bright light of the setting sun.

928. **Rays**—the sunset gleam. **Sleep there lovingly**—seem to linger over the hills as if out of fondness for the scene.

929. **Permanent**—unchanging. **Tell here of Love**—are associated in the mind with thoughts of love.

Who sought in them a refuge—*i.e.*, it is a fit place for a lover to betake himself to, if he wishes to escape from toils.

930. **Shocks**—turmoils.

931. **Stir**—excite. **Sting**—embitter. **Woos**—attracts. **Mocks**—disappoints.

. The meaning of the last three lines is :—This is a fit spot for a lover to betake himself to if he wishes to escape from the toils and turmoils of life, which deceive us with vain hopes.

100

932. **By heavenly feet thy paths are trod—Undying Love's**—*i.e.*, the god of love has here his abode.

933. **Ascends a throne**—has installed himself as king. **The god**—Love.

935. **Is a pervading life and light**—diffuses itself through and beautifies every object ; is a source of beauty which is seen everywhere. **So shown**—this all-pervading influence of love manifests itself.

936. **Those summits**—the mountain peaks.

938. **His eye is sparkling**—*i.e.*, love makes the commonest flowers of this place lovely.

His breath hath blown—love makes the flowers blossom.

939. **His soft and summer breath**—the gentle influence of love.

940. **Passes**—surpasses. **Most desolate hour**—utmost fury.

101

941. **Are of him**—are imbued with love.

942. **Are his shade**—afford shelter to a lover.

943. **Where he listeneth**—*i.e.*, which provide him music.

944. **Which slope his green path**—which form a green sloping walk for him.

945. **Bowed**—with head bent down in reverence. **Meet**—approach. **Adore**—worship.

946. **Kissing his feet**—touching his feet reverently.

947. **Covert**—thicket. **Hoar**—gray with age.

948. **Light**—bright green. **Young as joy**—fresh and tender.

949. **His**—his votaries. **Populous solitude**—a retreat lonely yet filled with images of the mind.

Cf. "peopled desert" (line 690) and notice the oxymoron. Cf. also "lone caves yet rife with airy images" (line 43).

102

951. **Fairy formed**—beautifully shaped. **Things**—insects.

952. **Him**—Love. **Notes**—musical strains. **Words**—*i.e.*, human prayers.

953. **Open their glad wings**—joyfully flit about.

954. **Gush**—bubbiing up.

955. **Fall of lofty fountains**—cataracts. **Bend**—motion.

956. **Stirring**—moving. **Bud**—flowers.

Brings swiftest thought of beauty—more quickly than anything else suggests the idea of beauty.

957. **Extend**—*i.e.*, are found in all directions.

958. **Unto one mighty end**—in order to fulfil one great purpose, *viz.*, to give a picture of ideal Love to men.

103

959. **That lore**—the gospel of love.

960. **Make his heart a spirit**—exalt his nature.

961. **That tender mystery**—the secret of loving.

962. **Love's recess**—the chosen seat of love.

963. **Waste**—a barren dreary tract of country ; hence, the cheerless unprofitable duties of life.

Driven him far from those—induced him to betake himself to solitude.

That is, such a scene is eminently fitted to awaken love in a man who has never experienced love before, and to augment the passion of him who has. It is a place where one distracted by the affairs of the world may well seek peace and quiet.

964. **For**—This word proceeds to account for something which the poet has not mentioned but left to be implied —that love cannot dwell in the world, for it retards its growth.

'Tis his nature to advance or die—love must either grow or decay.

965. **He stands not still**—love cannot remain stationary. **Or decays or grows**—either dwindles or develops.

966. **Boundless blessing**—inestimable boon. **Vie with**—equal.

967. **The immortal lights**—the heavenly bodies. **In its eternity**—in being eternal or undying.

The last four lines mean :—Love is a feeling which must either grow or decay : it cannot remain stationary. It must either tend to perish or to develop into an inestimable boon of eternal worth.

104

968. **For fiction**--for a poetic or imaginary purpose—to provide a suitable scene to the story of his novel.

969. **Peopling it with affections**—making it the scene of the loves of the characters sketched in his novel.

970, 71. **It was the scene which Passion.........being**—it was the only fit place which could have been made the scene of ideal love.

972. **Where early love his Psyche's zone unbound**—where young Cupid was wedded to his Psyche ; *i.e.* (stript of allegory), where his (Rousseau's) young heart or soul was influenced with love.

NOTE.—According to Greek mythology, the god Cupid married a mortal maiden, Psyche (the 'soul') whom he always visited in darkness. He warned her that if she attempted to see him, their happiness would be at an end. She disobeyed, and it came to pass as he had said. Psyche suffered all kinds of misery till again she was united to him for ever. The story is an allegory showing that the human soul is purified by love and sorrow, and thus prepared for the enjoyment of true happiness.

973. **Hallowed**—sanctified. **Lone**—lonely.

974. **Deep**—mysterious. **A sound and sense and sight of sweetness**—a beauty for the ears, for the eyes, and for the senses generally.

976. **Hath spread himself a couch**—flows through a soft bed. **Have reared a throne**—tower in their majestic height.

The meaning of the stanza is :—Rousseau selected this spot not to provide a suitable scene to his novel, but because it was the scene of his own ideal love, the spot where his young heart was first penetrated by the influence of love, and hence each inch of this region appeared to him to be invested with a sacred beauty. And the place is truly beautiful in every respect with the Rhone flowing below through a soft bed, and the Alps towering in their majestic height above.

105

977. **Lausanne**—a town on the north side of the Lake of Geneva, in Switzerland. It was the residence of Gibbon when he wrote his famous *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Ferney—a village north-west of Geneva, once the residence of Voltaire.

978. **Names**—famous personages. **Which unto you bequeathed a name**—who have made you famous too.

979. **Mortals**—though mortal. **By dangerous roads**—*i.e.* by attacking Christianity.

980. **Path**—means. **Perpetuity of fame**—immortality.

981. **Gigantic minds**—men of powerful genius. **Steep**—bold.

982. **Titan-like**—like the Titans, a race of giants who, according to the Greek fables, made war against God, and tried to scale heaven by piling mountains upon one another.

Daring doubts—sceptical beliefs. **Pile**—heap up.

983. **Thoughts which should call down thunder**—their attacks on the Christian religion—which God should have punished by hurling thunder upon them.

That is,—Like the Titans, who attacked God by piling Mount Ossa on Pelion, Gibbon and Voltaire attacked the Christian religion by basing their arguments on scepticism.

The flame of Heaven—the lightning.

984. **Again assailed**—these two writers attacked heaven same as the Titans had done before. **If Heaven, etc.**—The "if" here is connected with the subjunctive "should" in the preceding line.

985. **Research**—discoveries. **If Heaven the while on man...smile**—*i.e.*, if God had ever cared for what man does or what new views on religion he promulgates.

NOTES.—Notice the scepticism of Byron's own remark. The orthodox Christians, whose beliefs Gibbon and Voltaire denounced, held that such impiety was sure to call down the

wrath of God, though, as a matter of fact, says Byron, God cares neither for the opinions of the orthodox nor for those of the heterodox.

106

986. **The one**—*viz.*, Voltaire, a French author and critic (1694-1778). **Fire**—*i.e.*, full of fierce zeal. **Fickleness**—*i.e.*, constantly changing.

A child most mutable—as changeable as a child.

987. **In mind**—in intellectual capacity.

988. **A wit as various**—a versatile genius. **Gay**—humorous.

Grave—serious. **Sage**—philosophic. **Wild**—erratic.

989. **Bard**—poet. **Combined**—all in one.

990. **He multiplied himself among mankind**—he appeared before the world in many different capacities.

991. **The Proteus of their talents**—one who, possessing a versatile genius, was able to display many human talents one after another. Proteus was an old Greek sea-god who could take any shape he pleased.

His own—his special ability.

992. **Breathed most in ridicule**—chiefly expressed itself in the form of satire.

993. **Blew where it listed**—The simile is biblical. Vide *St. John*, iii. 8.—"The wind bloweth where it listeth etc." The meaning is—'he attacked everything and everyone without discrimination.'

Laying prone—fiercely attacking.

994. **Now**—at one time. **O'erthrow**—vanquish. **Now**—at another time. **Shake a throne**—"attack the principles of monarchy."

107

995. **The other**—*viz.*, Gibbon. **Deep and slow**—a profound but slow thinker.

Exhausting thought—given to long and deep thought. Literally it means that he was in the habit of thinking so long and deeply that it seemed as if he would exhaust the capacity of thought.

996. **Hiving**—storing. **Studious year**—year of study.

997. **In meditation dwelt**—was constantly employed in deep thought—so much that it seemed he lived in the midst of thought. **Wrought**—imbued.

998. **Shaped**—furnished. **His weapon**—*i.e.* his style. **An edge severe**—a bitter irony.

999. **Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer**—attacking the holiest doctrines of Christianity with the lightest ridicule.

1000. **The lord of irony**—an expert in the use of sarcasm. **That master-spell**—that most potent and wonderfull faculty.

1001. **Stung to wrath**—infuriated. **Which grew from fear**—the more they feared his irony the more were they furious upon him.

1002. **Doomed him to the zealot's ready Hell**—the orthodox, whom Gibbon attacked, condemned him to the horrors of Hell, as they are so ready to do in the case of all who hold heterodox views.

1003. **Which**—the process of "dooming to hell"; *i. e.*, denunciation and cursing. **Answers to all doubts**—is the only reply they have to the arguments of scepticism.

NOTE.—Gibbon throughout his history, but especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, attacks Christianity with an irony for which he is famous. This gave great offence to the orthodox who denounced him as an atheist fit to be condemned to Hell—a way so common to those who cannot meet argument with argument.

108

1004. **Peace be with their ashes**—may their souls rest in peace !

1005. **Merited**—deserved. **The penalty is paid**—they have suffered punishment for their impiety.

1006. **It is not ours to judge**—it is not for man to pass judgement on his fellow-men. **Condemn**—punish.

1007. **The hour when such things shall be made known unto all**—death will decide which creed is true and which false.

1008. **Hope**—hope of heaven. **Dread**—fear of hell. **Alloyed**—moderated.

1009. **Slumber on one pillow in the dust**—death which is the common lot of all.

1010. **Which......decayed**—and which, we known for certain, is inevitable.

1011. **It shall revive**—the spirit will come to life again —on the Day of Judgment. **Trust**—faith.

1012. **Forgiven**—sc. by God for our sins. **Suffer what is just**—meet with due punishment.

The meaning generally is :—Both Voltaire and Gibbon are now dead, and either suffering the tortures of hell (as his enemies believe) or enjoying the bliss of heaven. For who knows what their fate has been ? It is not for man to pass judgment on his fellow-men : that rests in the hands of God alone. It is not till death that these mysteries will be cleared, and death is the inevitable lot of all men. And when after death the spirit will rise again on the Day of Judgment, it will be either to receive God's pardon or punishment for our sins in life.

109

1013. **Quit man's works**—leave inhabited regions. **Read his maker's**—study Nature.

1014. **Suspend this Page**—finish this Canto. Byron finished Canto III in July and passed August and September in an Alpine tour in the company of a friend. In October he crossed the Alps and entered Italy.

1015. **Reveries**—*i.e.*, fancies. **Feed**—sustain ; enlarge. **Which from my reveries I feed**—which I have lengthened by my occasional reflections.

1016. **Prolonging without end**—growing interminable.

1017. **White**—snow-clad. **Tend**—are attracted. This is true to fact—clouds and storms are attracted by high mountains.

1018. **Pierce them**—penetrate the clouds, *i.e.*, cross the high Alps. **Survey whatever may be permitted**—enjoy what scenes I can.

1019. **As my steps I bend**—as I proceed.

1020. **To their most great and growing region**—to scale the Alpine heights where they (the clouds) are formed.

1021. **The earth to her embrace......air**—the earth seems to meet the heavens.

110

1022. **Looking on thee**—as one gazes at you (from the top of the Alps).

1023. **Full flashes on the soul**—one is vividly reminded of. **The light of ages**—the glories of the past.

1024. **Since**—from the time when. **The fierce Carthaginian**—Hannibal, a famous Carthaginian general, who defeated the Romans in several battles, but was ultimately driven from Italy (B.C. 247—183).

Almost won thee—It is believed that if Hannibal had marched on Rome immediately after the battle of Cannae (B.C. 216), he could have easily taken Rome itself, and made himself master of Italy.

1025. **Last halo**—dying glory. **Chiefs**—popular leaders, like Rienzie. **Sages**—popular writers like Dante and Petrarch.

1026. **Glorify**—shed lustre on. **Thy consecrated pages**—thy sacred history.

1027. **The throne and grave of empires**—the ruling country of a great empire (the Roman Empire), and the seat of the smaller kingdoms that arose out of its ruins (such as the kingdom of the Goths and the Lombards).

Still—even to this day.

1028. **Fount**—the fountain-head of knowledge. **Panting mind**—scholars in pursuit of knowledge. **Assuages**—satisfies.

1029. **Quaffing there his fill**—where they may acquire as much knowledge as they wish.

1030. **Rome's imperial hill**—Rome comprised within its area seven hills of which the most important were the Capitoline and the Palatine ; hence Rome was often called 'the city of seven hills'.

That is, Rome, though no more the capital of an empire, is still the intellectual capital of the world.

111

1031. **A theme**—*viz.*, Childe Harold's pilgrimage.

1032. **Renewed**—resumed. **With no kind auspices**—under most unfavourable circumstances—a bitter mood of mind, described just after.

To feel we are not......been—to know that we are changed.

1033. **To deem we are not......be**—to feel that we have failed to realize our ideal.

1034. **To steel the heart against itself**—to make oneself insensible to mental pain.

1036. **Proud caution**—haughty reserve. **Aught**—anything else fit to be concealed.

1038. **Tyrant spirit of our thought**—predominating passion of one's mind.

1039. **A stern task of soul**—a most difficult task for the soul.

It is taught—we have to learn it all the same.

The meaning is :—How hard it is to know that we are changed, to feel that we have failed to realize our ideal, to make the heart insensible to mental suffering, and to hide from men's knowledge the predominating passion of our mind! And yet, however difficult, the lesson has to be learnt.

112

1040. **Woven into song**—put in verse.

1041. **Harmless wile**—an innocent form of amusement.

1042. **The colouring of the scenes**—which serves to make the scenes more attractive.

Fleet along—pass rapidly before my eyes.

1043. **Seize in passing**—detain in their passage. **Beguile my breast** —amuse me.

1045. **Fame is the thirst of youth**—it is only young men that aspire for fame.

1046. **Frown or smile**—praise or blame ; popularity or unpopularity.

1047. **Guerdon**—reward.

1048. **I stood and stand alone**—I have ever lived in isolation from society. **Remembered or forgot**—I do not care if my name will last or perish.

113

1050. **Flattered its rank breath**—meanly courted popularity.

1051. **Bowed to its idolatries a patient knee**—paid reverence to whatever the world calls great and holy.

1052. **Coined my cheek to smiles**—forced myself to produce an artificial smile to please the world.

Cried aloud in worship of an echo—joined the crowd in bestowing senseless praise on the undeserving.

1054. **They could not deem me one of such**—I never mixed completely; I always kept myself aloof from.

1055. **Among them but not of them**—in their midst but not as a part of them. **In a shroud of thoughts**—absorbed in my own thoughts.

1056. **Which are not their thoughts**—which had nothing in common with the world. **Still could**—still could have stood aloof.

1057. **Filed**—defiled ; polluted. **Which thus itself subdued**—for the impurities of my character have humbled me.

114

1059. **Let us part fair foes**—I shall bear no malice against the world.

1060. **Though I have found them not**—though that is not my experience.

1061. **Words which are things**—words which have a corresponding reality.

Hopes which will not deceive—hopes which will be fulfilled.

1062. **Virtues which are merciful......failing**—virtuous persons who are really kind-hearted, and do not try to entrap those who are weak.

1063. **Deem**—believe.

1064. **O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve**—that some human sympathies are real.

1065. **Two or one—only a few.** **Are almost what they seem**—are not quite hypocrites.

1066. **That Goodness is no name**—that some good men do really exist.

Happiness no dream—that happiness is sometimes really attainable.

115

1067. **This song**—Canto III. See stanza 1.

1068. **My daughter ! with thy name...end**—I shall conclude this canto with an apostrophe to my daughter.

1070. **Can be so wrapt in thee**—*i.e.*, though I do not see you I am constantly thinking of you.

1071. **To whom the shadows of far years extend**—who will faintly remember me in the future. The metaphor is taken from lengthening shadows projected to a distance.

1072. **Albeit**—although. **Brow**—face.

1073. **My voice shall with......blend**—my verses will raise my image in your imagination.

1074. **Reach**—here a transitive verb, having for its object 'token and tone' in the next line. **When mine is cold**—when I am dead.

1075. **Token**—sign. **Tone**—sound. **Mould**—This may mean (1) image, or (2) dust.

116

1076. **To aid thy mind's development**—to assist thee in thy education.

1077. **To watch thy dawn of little joy**—watch the beginning to take interest in things around thee.

1079. **Wonders yet to thee**—which in thy innocence and

simplicity appear wonderful to thee—but which with familiarity will grow hateful, as they have become to me.

1082. **Reserved**—destined.

1083. **This was in my nature**—love of children was an instinctive feeling in me.

N.B.—On Byron's love of children, Moore, biographer, remarks : "There were indeed few things Lord Byron more delighted in than to watch beautiful children at play." Compare also stanza 54.

117

1085. **Dull Hate**—hatred *of me*. That is, though you should be taught by your mother and her friends to hate me.

1087. **Should be shut from thee**—*i.e.*, though they may not allow you even to take my name. **A spell**—*i.e.*, a dangerous influence.

1088. **Fraught desolation**—productive of ruinous consequence.

A broken claim—a relationship now dissolved.

1090. **Though the grave closed between us**—though I should die and you should never get an opportunity of seeing me again.

'Twere the same—that will cause no alteration in your feeling for me.

1091. **Drain my blood from out thy being**—cancel the relationship between you and me.

1092. **And an attainment**—and though they should succeed in that aim.

1093. **That more than life**—that love, which is more valuable than life.

118

1094. **Born in bitterness**—born when her father and mother had quarrelled.

1095. **Nurtured**—brought up. **In convulsion**—amidst fierce surroundings. **Sire**—father.

1096. **These were the elements**—these (*viz.*, bitterness and convulsion) made up his very being. **And thine no less**—and hence they made up they being too.

1097. **Such are around thee**—bitterness and strife form thy environment.

Thy fire shall be more tempered—the fierce elements in your character will, I hope, be softened in your case.

1098. **Thy hope for higher**—thou mayst hope to live a more happy life than mine has ever been.

1099. **Sweet be thy cradled slumber**—may you sleep peacefully in your cradle.

1100. **Respire**—breathe.

1101. **Waft**—blow.

1102. **With a sigh**—alas. **Though mightst have been to me**—*i.e.*, you would have been a blessing to me.

UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS

1. Was Byron a romantic poet ? In what way did he differ from the other romantic poets of his age?
2. Examine Byron as the romantic puzzle or the romantic paradox.
3. Write an essay on Byron as a Satirist in verse.
4. Write a note on Byron as a revolutionary poet and the poet of freedom.
5. Write a note on the Byronic hero or Byronism
6. Write a note on the autobiographical elements in Byron's Poetry.
7. Bring out the confessional elements in Byron's Poetry. Can the charge of insincerity and pose be levelled against Byron?
8. Write an essay on Byron's attitude towards Nature.
9. Give your estimate of Lord Byron as a poet.
10. "Byron had no humour ; but he had a most keen, abounding and verstile wit." Discuss.
    (P.U. Previous 1965)
11. Can you account for the tremendous popularity enjoyed by *Childe Harold* immediately on its publication ?
    (M.A. P.U. Old 1964)
12. "Byron turned the inherent conflict between the classicism and romanticism to a happy and ingenious use" Discuss with reference to *Don Juan*.
13. "Don Juan lacks serious substances, complex understanding and a sincere and valid criticism of the world" Refute or support this statement.

Or

14. The conventionlity, the energy, the conviction, the play on easily aroused responses are all typical of Byron's works. Discuss in relation to *Childe Harold's* Pilgrimage, Canto III (P. U. 1967)
15. What characteristics of Byron as a poet do you notice in *Childe Harold's* Pilgrimage, Canto III ? Illustrate your answer from the text.

Or

16. "The paradoxes of his (Byron's) nature are fully reflected in *Don Juan*, which is itself both a romantic epic and a realistic satire." Discuss with special reference to Canto-I. (M.A. P.U. 1968)
17. Between *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* which, do you think, gives the true expession of Byron's poetic personality.
18. "Byron's poetry is deficient in the inner quality of the most truthful poetry and proficient in the more external quality of oratory". Discuss.
19. Support or refute the criticism which finds "little but false splendour and shallow style" in Byron's Verse.
20. Discuss the causes and vicissitudes of Byron's reputation, at home and abroad.
21. "Indeed being himself of a theatrical habits of mind and a rhetorical habit of speech, yet not without a touch of true poetic vision, what he (Byron) really gave us back was *Romance*." Discuss.
22. Would you agree that what Byron gives us is not poetry but rhetoric ?
23. Write a note an 'Byronic hero' or on Byron's oratory in verses.
24. "Byron—no artist" intellectually shallow and hurried, a poet by compulsion of personality rather in the native colour of his mind, inferior in all these respects to the finer strain of his great contemporaries. Do you agree with this estimate ?
25. Consider Byron as a satrist.

26. "Byron lacks Supreme imagination......A creator in the highest sense Byron is not". Do you agree.

27. Write notes on :—

    (*a*) The element of oratory in Byron's poetry.
    (*b*) Byron's handling of Spenserian stanza.
    (*c*) Byron's lyrics.

28. Discuss Byron's romantic melancholy.

29. "He (Byron) sought nature in order to find himself." Explain and illustrate.

30. "Byron could only represent himself under various disguises." Examine with reference to the characters invented by him.

31. Trace the poetical ancestry of Byron, and consider his place in English Literature.

32. What seems to you to be the characteristic execllence, and what the defects of Byron ?

33. To what extent would you agree with the charge of insincerity brought against Byron's poetry ?

34. "There was nothing really new in Byron. There was only a great personal force directing itself half involuntarily into contemporary way." Discuss.

35. Justify and illustrate from the poem the opinion that the genius of Byron was oratorical rather than lyrical. Comment.

36. Attempt a justification of Goethe's remark, that "the English may think of Byron as they please; but this is certain that they can show no poet who is to be compared with him. He is different from all the others, and for the most part great.

37. What seems to you the characteristic strength and weakness of Byron as a poet ?

38. Byron remarked. "I *awoke* one morning and found myself famous." Account for his sudden popularity and its subsequent decline.

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